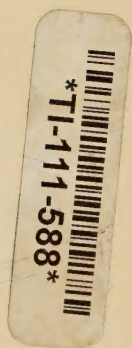



THE
MAN
WHO
WON

CYRUS
TOWNSEND
BRADY

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THE MAN WHO WON



"I doubted you, God forgive me, I doubted you"

[Page 238]

The Man Who Won

BY
CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

AUTHOR OF
THE ISLAND OF SURPRISE, ETC.

BY COURTESY OF THE VITAGRAPH COMPANY
OF AMERICA, THIS BOOK IS ILLUSTRATED
WITH PHOTOGRAPHS OF SCENES TAKEN
FROM THE PICTURE PLAY



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1919

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TO
MY VALUED AND BELOVED FRIENDS

EDWARD D. JONES

AND

“ THE BOSS ”

*In the hope that the story may return to them a few
of the many happy hours they have given to me*

PREFACE

THERE can be no gainsaying the fact that I like a preface. On a few occasions I have been prevailed upon to omit this, to me, necessary part of a book, and I have always regretted my compliance. So here's another for this, my latest novel. I used to write four books a year, all with prefaces. Now one is as much as I can manage, again with its proper preface.

This story began in an automobile and managed to get itself developed on a long tour through the mountains; typical of the speed of the age—even in literature! It speaks well for my self-restraint that I have kept automobiles out of my story. The plot being somewhat intricate—I venture to point out this fact for the delectation of those who read prefaces instead of books—it had to be worked out carefully. To that end I called in council my severest critics and my fondest admirers. In a pause in the journey under the great old trees on the lawn of the Maplewood Hotel, at Pittsfield, we spent an entire evening going over the situations and resolving them, after a continuously spirited debate in which our emphatic voices rose and carried far on the still air of that lovely night. So much so that

Preface

other guests in the garden, enjoying the beauty of the summer evening, may have been amused and even a little shocked by the discussion which, lacking the clue, must have seemed inexplicable to them.

Well, having arranged things to our satisfaction the story was written and published serially as a novelette and then it was made into a motion-picture feature and then it was finally rewritten, because of its success in previous forms, into its present full-fledged novel state.

This genesis of a romance may amuse and interest and the story may follow suit, at least I hope so. At any rate here it is. May you have as much fun out of it as we all have had.

C. T. B.

The Hemlocks, Park Hill,
Yonkers, N. Y., June, 1919.

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BOOK I

“ Find the Man ”

The Man Who Won

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH BARBARA LE MOYNE LOOKS ON LIFE AND DEATH
AT ODDS

IT WAS warm and still under the trees. The rude, ill-defined trail wound steadily upward through virgin forest. The girl quickened the pace of her horse. She was tired of the monotony of the pine woods, and was anxious to get to the open crest of the foot hills of the coast range. Presently she reached her high goal and with a sigh of relief drew rein, dismounted and walked forward to the brink of the hill. She stopped on the highest point and surveyed the enchanting prospect as she had often done before. Silently she revelled in its color; she noted again with keen pleasure the green of the mighty forest, the silver of the shallow river, the gold of the bordering sand and far beyond all the deep blue of the tossing sea. The scene lacked nothing but life, and as she stared that was added.

The primeval loneliness was dissipated by human figures. Though they were far beneath her she could see them quite easily with the naked eye. She made

out six men coming from the forest and moving down the clearing on the brink of the precipice overlooking the river. One was obviously a white man; she could not place the others. Their brown heads were covered with brilliant-hued caps; they wore short gaudy jackets and shorter trousers, their brown feet and legs were bare, and around each man's middle a broad and glistening sash of many colors was twisted. She had never seen a Malay, she knew nothing of the sarong which was his distinctive girdle, but that these dark strangers were foreign and semi-savage she could not doubt.

She fixed her gaze upon them. She had never before seen a human being there. So far as she knew, that lonely shore, that shallow river-mouth was unsettled and unvisited. Her curiosity was aroused by their unexpected presence and she surveyed them with a vivid and surprised interest. She was conscious of a vague feeling of resentment as if these strangers had suddenly profaned a shrine of her own, though she could lay claim to no proprietorship in that strip of No Man's Land along the shore.

Suddenly her interest quickened into an intensity of horror. Battle and murder and sudden death invaded the one-time peaceful solitude with appalling abruptness. They came into being with the advent of man! She stood petrified for a second and then leaning forward, screamed half in terror, half in

warning. Her voice was lost in the intervening distance. She could only stand and stare, her breath coming short, her heart beating furiously as the great battle was waged below her—an unconscious spectator, judge and, as it happened in the end, guerdon of the conflict!

For one instant the white man's long-continued watchfulness was abated. Of that solitary moment of faltering vigilance Po-Yan-Pen took prompt advantage. His crooked knife flashed in the sunlight as he leaped at the back of his master. Happily, Fortune in complaisant mood, overlooked the momentary lapse of the American. As the Malay struck at the engineer he himself tripped and fell. Such was the force behind the blow that the assailant, unable to recover himself, pitched down at the other's feet, his curved kris burying itself in the earth.

The American sensed his danger instantly. He turned and kicked the half-risen Po-Yan-Pen with such violence that he drove his unprepared body over the cliff and into the river below. At the same time he whipped out his revolver and fired point blank at the other four coming at him. He missed Wan-Aman, to whom Po-Yan-Pen's leadership had fallen, but he accounted for the next man, who went down with a bullet in his brain. Before he could fire again Wan-Aman and the remaining pair were upon him. His revolver was knocked from his hand and fol-

lowed Po-Yan-Pen's body down the cliff. Wan-Aman cut him deep in the shoulder. The fourth Malay struck him over the head with a heavy ax, while the last one darted in from the side, seeking an opportunity to use his short stabbing dagger.

Thus menaced on all sides, though he had accounted for two of his mutinous and murderous crew, and was weaponless before the other three, the engineer resorted to the offensive, characteristic of his temper and race. Before he could deliver a second cut he felled the man with the beliong by a terrific blow of his fist, and then sustaining a second stab from the kris he leaped at Wan-Aman. The now thoroughly frightened Malay strove to grapple with him, but the white man lifted him up, and by a wrestler's trick, loosened his grip and hurled him senseless to the rocks. The American picked up Wan-Aman's kris and rushed at the only one of the quintette of villains still upon his feet. This fellow was made of sterner stuff. He braced himself for the shock and met it bravely. Two knives flashed in the air and the ring of blade on blade penetrated the dull ear of the man who had been knocked down. He grasped the American by the heel and the three men went down together and rolled wild-animal-like on the earth, confusedly fighting and striking.

The petrified woman on the high hill saw all this clearly. From the first leap of the striking traitor,

against which she strove to warn the man of her race with that futile cry, to the last struggle on the earth in that confused mêlée, she missed nothing. Silent still, she watched with fixed look the white man rise triumphant at last, only to stagger and crash down apparently helpless and lie still by the side of the men he had conquered against such odds. Not a detail of the battle passed unnoticed. She would never forget the flash of his knife as the conqueror lifted it up and thrust it down again and again in mad fury into the body of his last helpless foe before that final fall.

So sudden had been the attack, so swift the battle, that only the presence of the still bodies in the clearing convinced her of the reality of the action. When it was over she could have cried aloud.

For a moment or two she considered what to do. Her instinct was to fly, of course; to ride back to her camp and bring help. But she discarded that idea so soon as it was formed. For one thing it would take time. The white man had been alive a moment since. He might be alive now. If she waited he might die. She must go to him.

She stared again and could detect no movement among the slain. They were all dead or dying apparently. With intent look she searched wood and bank and shore. No others appeared. She had, she thought, no interruptions to fear. She would go

down to give what assistance she could, to find out what it was all about. She turned, called to her horse, mounted him lightly and rode down the mountain side through the trees, picking her way over the trailless declivities and through the woods with no little skill and address.

When the white man at last got the mastery over the two remaining villains, and wresting the kris from the last survivor, held him down with one hand, while he thrust him through the heart, and in his passion repeated the blow again and again, he was utterly unconscious of his wounds, his weakness, his loss of blood. It was not till he got to his feet that he realized his helplessness. He took a step or two brushing the blood from his eyes and then fell. He summoned all his resolution as he went down and barely managed to keep from fainting. He lay still for the moment, suffering agonies, and then nerved himself for a final effort. He got to his hands and knees, bound his handkerchief about his head and disregarding the other wounds, sufficiently serious to have incapacitated a less resolved man, he set himself to get rid of the bodies of the four Malays. With incredible effort and slowly with long pauses he managed to roll them off the cliff and into the river. He knew that he had come in at the flood and that a sufficient time had elapsed for the tide to have turned, so that the bodies would be carried out

to sea with river current and ocean ebb. He did not want any dead men about in case he should be rescued. Their bodies might give rise to awkward questions.

His painful and wellnigh impossible task at last accomplished, he sought to go down to the brink of the river, where his vessel, a small topsail schooner, was hidden in the trees that there bordered a little creek. But that was beyond him. He realized that he could scarcely expect succor on that lonely coast—for that reason he had welcomed it as his landing place—and that if he were to get help he must go for it. But further progress was impossible. He tried crawling along the cliff toward the descent up which they had all come earlier that morning, but his slow progress soon stopped. Despite his iron determination, strength of body, mind, and will, all gave way at once apparently, and he pitched down, burying his face in the earth, and knew no more. This time it appeared that he was out for good.

He was conscious of nothing. He did not hear the footfalls of a horse crashing through the underbrush, treading down fallen branches. Even the cessation of sound, as the horse was stopped, made no impression upon him. He did not know that the girl, white faced, but resolute, had dismounted and had drawn her pistol, a light automatic her guide had insisted upon her carrying everywhere. With her

other hand she took the flask of whisky, also a requisite insisted upon, from the pocket of her jacket, and thus doubly armed stepped forward.

She could see him clearly as she came through the underbrush out from the cover of the trees. At the first sight of the open she stopped amazed. Had she not seen six men engaged in deadly struggle, yet but one was there! Where were the others?

She could not answer the question, nor did it trouble her long. She noted that the one body before her was that of the white man. Her sympathies were all with him naturally. He was of her race. He had been the subject of a cowardly attack. He had contended triumphantly against overwhelming odds. Those were reasons enough.

With a sudden fear she ran toward him, bent down to him and turned him over on his back by exerting all the strength of her vigorous young arms. As she dropped her unnecessary weapon, she lifted his head and put the flask to his lips and then she took a good look at him. His face was that of a young man, whose full dark beard did not disguise its rugged strength. His lips were white—his face lined and bronzed by toil and exposure, so that she deemed him older than he would appear under different circumstances. His hair was matted with blood, which had run down across his cheeks and into his beard, and which was still flowing from be-

neath the loosely twisted handkerchief. Her hands, as she supported his shoulder, came in contact with more blood, at which she shuddered, but would not release her hold.

He was in desperate case obviously. She managed to force a few drops of liquor between his teeth, whereat he opened his eyes a moment, lifted his head a little, coughed and muttered between his clenched teeth a word which she caught, bending eagerly to listen.

“Water.”

She laid him down, ran to a near-by stream, made a carrier of her jaunty Stetson hat, filled it, brought it back, lifted his head again and put it to his lips. He drank avidly. And then he spoke falteringly a second time.

“That damned — Po-Yan-Pen — betrayed — water——”

Then his eyes closed and his head fell back upon her arm. She laid him down gently, picked up her Stetson hat again and ran once more down the declivity to the spring trickling from the rocks. She was so intent upon her purpose that she did not note certain dark objects being swept out to sea by the current of the river below her. Again she filled the hat, which held water perfectly, so close its texture, and once more ran back to the side of the again unconscious figure. Then she paused uncertainly. She

had no first-aid packet or other material for dressings with her. Her hesitation was but momentary. She tore off the riding jacket, and then ripped off the sleeve and front half of her linen waist. She did not stop to cover her bare arm and shoulder with the coat, but set immediately to wash and bandage the man's wounds, especially those in his head and shoulders.

She was rewarded again by a completer return to consciousness, as she stanchd the flow of blood and ministered to him. She was so busy over him that at first she did not notice his prolonged stare. When she became aware of it she realized her appearance and with a blush almost as crimson as the blood stains on the bandages and on her remaining sleeve, she laid his head down and resumed her jacket, buttoning it up to her throat. Then she spoke to him.

"I saw it all," she began, "you were splendid. How do you feel now?"

The man had not ceased to stare. He could find no words at first. The woman gave him another swallow of water and whisky and then he found words.

"Who—what—are you?" he whispered brokenly in a sort of bewilderment.

"Only a woman. What became of those men? Why did they attack you?"

But the man closed his lips and made no answer. The woman waited a moment and then went on.

“You can tell me all about it when you feel better. Now I am going to my camp to get help for you. Are you afraid to stay here alone?”

The man smiled faintly.

“I’m afraid of nothing—after all I’ve gone through,” he answered. “You see——”

Then his lips closed again.

“Exactly,” said the woman. “I’ll drag you under the shade of this tree, leave you this flask and this automatic and be back in two hours with horses, a wagon or a litter, and help——”

“The flask only. Keep your gun. You might need it.”

“Why? Are there any more of those——” she began, apprehensively, but he cut her short.

“So far as I know—you and I are the only living beings—in this world,” he said.

She nodded, and then with an exhibition of strength, surprising in one of her somewhat slight build, she dragged him under the shade of the nearest trees and made him comfortable. As she rose to go he feebly detained her.

“You have—have saved my life—doubtless. Your hand,” he said. When she gave it he pressed it to his lips. “I may not be here when you come back,” he continued, “and that is for—thank you and—good-bye.”

She completely misunderstood him. She looked

at him anxiously indeed as she withdrew her hand and turned away.

“You’ll be all right. I’ll hurry back,” she said. “Keep up your courage.”

He watched her mount and ride off and when he lost sight of her he listened till all sound of her going died away. He had spoken truly, indeed, in those farewell words. She had misunderstood. No one must find him there. He must disappear as the Malays had, if not in the same way.

He was a strong man and a hardy, a deep draught from the well-filled flask gave him a certain temporary vigor. Her bandaging had been well done. The flow of blood from wounded head and shoulders was stopped. He sat up; with his knife he cut away his shirt and tied it in clumsy, but effective fashion, about the deeper wound in his body. The rude bandage would serve temporarily at any rate. Then he started for the shore. He did not try to walk. He must husband his strength. But he could crawl. Slowly he made his way down to the river. She had said two hours. He must make it in one. At all hazards he must be far away before she returned. And she would return quicker than she had promised, instinctively he realized she was that kind of a girl.

He had lost count of time when he reached the side of the schooner anchored in the creek. There his hardest task began. He had to lift himself up



He managed to hoist a scrap of canvas

and scramble aboard. He had scarcely strength to cut the anchor rope. How he managed to hoist a scrap of canvas he could never tell. The current and the ebb both acted for him. The boat drifted out of the creek into the river, was carried over the bar; the wind caught the rag of sail and in a few moments the little vessel was rising and falling in the gentle waves of the mighty sea. Then, and not till then, did he faint dead away. He lay on the deck in a state of coma from which, at first, even the sudden deluge of rain, precursor of greater storm, which came squall-like across the hills toward the ocean, could not arouse him.

CHAPTER II

WHEREIN DEMPSEY CANNOT DISPUTE THE TESTIMONY OF THE CURVED BLADE

WHEN Barbara Le Moyne had asked Dempsey to be her chaperon in the North Woods he had accepted with an alacrity which arose largely from ignorance. Dempsey had never come across the word. Orthographically it spelled itself this way in Dempsey's mind, "Chap-her-own." He thought he sensed vaguely some relation either to the "shaps" he wore or the chap he was. Barbara seeing his dilemma mischievously refrained from explanation or definition. She let him wrestle unaided with the puzzling proposition. If the suggestion had come from someone else he might have considered it as a covert proposal for his hand and heart. His respect and regard for Barbara Le Moyne precluded that interpretation. He looked upon her as little less than an angel. She was not in the least angelic—in appearance a brunette; in disposition of a hot temper—two things angels never are or can be. Yet it was singular that she had produced the same effect upon a practical, albeit half-dead, civil engineer and the very much alive deputy sheriff. The former

The Testimony of the Curved Blade

had seen her for a few moments only, the latter had known her all his life. The resulting impression was the same.

Dempsey had been a follower of the girl's father when he came out to the Northwest to seek the fortune he had amassed and left to her, and he had transferred his allegiance to the daughter with the passing of the parent. Probably Dempsey was enabled to continue in his angelic obsession so far as the girl was concerned, because he had seen her only at rare intervals and, as now, when she had fled from civilization to the freedom of the wild.

It was not in Dempsey to decline any job that was offered to him by anybody, much less a woman. That is the reason he was deputy sheriff with all the powers, responsibilities, and anxieties, of the office, in one of the wildest districts yet left on the Northwest coast. Distant alike on the one side from railroads and on the other from seaport towns was Barbara's own vast section of territory and that is the reason she camped there on occasion.

"Well, Miss Babby," and whether that was short for baby or Barbara no one knew, not even Dempsey. "I guess there ain't nothin' I wouldn't do for your father's daughter."

"But I want you for myself alone," answered the girl.

Dempsey laughed.

“So long as you are you,” he went on, and his transparent honesty redeemed the unconscious banality of the phrase, “it wouldn’t make no difference to me whose daughter you was.”

“That’s better. Well, then, you are to be chap-eron and play propriety.”

“Sure, though I don’t rightly know what the job is. I takes it that it ain’t got nothin’ to do with “shaps” which you don’t wear ’em.”

Barbara shook her head. “No, yet I may some-time.”

“I guess if we split them big words of yourn we’ll git a little more for’arder. Leastways I’ll allus be your own shap, or chap, or whatever else you want, Miss Babby.”

“Thank you, Dempsey. No woman could ask more,” returned Barbara gleefully.

Dempsey nodded gravely, delighted alike with his own acumen and her reception of it.

“In addition to bein’ whatever them words may be, Miss Babby,” he went on, “I’m an officer of the law an’ there ain’t goin’ to be no improprieties loose an’ rangin’ while I’m around. Leastways not so long as I got my weepsons with me, which I ain’t never without them. Still, I guess we better have another feemale along with us. One that kin cook an’ wash an’ keep her mouth shet, so’s to be kinda company for you.”

The Testimony of the Curved Blade

“Weakening, are you, Dempsey? Getting cold feet, as they say out here?”

Dempsey lifted a huge foot and moved it solemnly to and fro before her like some kind of a wave- or heave-offering, while he said, with a gravity appropriate to the occasion, “That there foot ain’t never been cold in the way which you means sence I was born. I’m only jest a thinkin’ of your comfort an’ happiness.”

“Well, I suppose we shall have to have some sort of a woman along with us, even under the protecting aegis of the law,” laughed the girl.

“I ain’t familiar with that there animal, but I takes your meanin’ jest the same.”

“And where?” asked Barbara, “are we going to find a woman who can cook and wash and above all, keep her mouth shut at the same time?”

“I think Mrs. Dempsey will about fill that bill,” returned the big frontiersman, confidently, his eyes twinkling. “She come well recommended to me for them very qualities, an’ she ain’t never failed me yet.”

“Dempsey, you have broken my heart,” said the girl, with a well-assumed look of profound sadness. “I always considered the possibility of coming back here and marrying you in my old age. And now, although I have only missed a year, you have gone and got married.”

"You will have your joke, Miss Babby," laughed Dempsey, feeling somehow foolishly flattered by this, to him, delightful byplay.

"And you call marrying me a joke?" she asked in further merry mockery.

"Lord love you, no," returned the deputy sheriff. "It ain't no joke as it is; what it would be if —" he stopped in great confusion.

"I tell you what it is," she went on, laughing gaily at his discomfiture, "you want your wife along for your own comfort, not for mine. Therefore, since I would not, for the world, be the cause of parting two loving hearts, I say, bring her with us to the camp."

"You'll find she kin cook a heap better'n any of the boys, an' do a heap to make you feel more comfortable, I'm sure," urged the confused sheriff, for he knew that Barbara was more than half right in her conclusion.

And thus it was that Barbara Le Moyne, with Mrs. Dempsey to wash and cook and keep her mouth shut, and Dempsey to play chaperon and see to the proprieties, enjoyed her little outing in the great woods, unhampered by the conventions so generally respected, though sometimes abhorred. She hunted, fished, rode, and explored to the limit of her desire. She sought adventures and found some of a minor importance, but never before had she chanced upon

The Testimony of the Curved Blade

anything with the tremendous dramatic quality of that morning's happenings. Inevitably, it impressed her deeply.

She galloped restlessly, madly, down the trails and over the rough roads toward the camp to bring succor to the unfortunate man who had fought so brave a battle and whom she had left desperately wounded, dying perhaps, under the trees on the cliff overlooking the river-mouth, and the bay, and the great sea beyond.

She burst into the clearing like a whirlwind, scattering dogs and men. She threw herself from her panting, sweating horse, calling for Dempsey, in the same moment. There was that in her voice which caused the old man, whose natural habit was leisurely, although he could be as quick as the youngest in an emergency, to burst out of the nearest tent and rush up to her.

"There has been an awful fight, Dempsey," she cried out, "five men against one. Savages! And one white man killed them all. It was magnificent. I saw every bit of it and then I rushed down to help. And he is almost dead. I bound up his wounds, and left him on the shore. We must bring him back to the camp and——"

"Hold on, Miss, hold on," interposed Dempsey, as Barbara paused for a moment for want of breath. "I don't quite seem to git the rights of this."

“It is not necessary that you should,” went on the girl impatiently. “Have Joe and Dick hitch up the buckboard quick. Bring plenty of blankets, and whisky and things. You get your horse and come with me. Have them follow the road and trail through the woods to the high cliff where it overlooks the river and bay—San Juan, you know. We’ll have to carry him from there to the road on a litter. Oh, don’t argue. Why can’t you be like your wife sometimes?”

The frontiersman stared. He was not used to such sudden demands. He thought for a moment that his young mistress had gone mad.

“Dempsey,” said the girl, impetuously throwing open her jacket, “he was bleeding to death. I tore off half my waist to bind up his head and shoulder. Look. See the blood? It isn’t mine, it’s his. Now, will you believe?”

“Get that buckboard out an’ be quick about it,” said Dempsey, turning to Joe. He was now entirely convinced and moved to quick action. “An’ Dick,” to one who with the other men, had clustered about the pair, “bring blankets, poles an’ that there medicine chest.”

“Shall we hitch up the mules as usual, Sheriff?” asked Joe.

“No, take the two best horses in the camp an’ foller us fast. Don’t you want a drink or a bite to

eat afore we gits away? You look kinda palish, Miss Babby."

"I want nothing but to go back there quick. Get your horse and hurry," returned Barbara quickly.

It happened that the sheriff's own horse was already saddled. His admirable wife, who could cook, wash, and keep her mouth shut, could also keep her ears open. She had heard every word. Foreseeing the need, she had brought up her husband's horse. With a nod and a hearty word of appreciation, which more than repaid his silent, but efficient "woman," as he called her, the sheriff swung into the saddle and motioned the girl, who had remounted her own horse, to lead the way. She set off at a furious gallop. At the first open and level space the frontiersman overtook her.

"T'aint no use to ride at this rate, Miss Babby," he said, laying his hand on her horse's bridle rein. "Take it a little easier. We'll gain in the long run."

"The man may be dying."

"Ef so, killin' your horse won't git us there in time to save him. That mare of yours is pretty well blowed already, you got to spare her a little," he returned wisely.

"She ought to be. She has been ridden hard," was the answer.

But the girl recognized the force in the man's words. She checked her horse and brought her down

from the mad gallop to a less exacting pace, which rendered conversation possible.

"Now, tell me all about it," said the sheriff, loping along by her side.

"I thought I had."

"You ain't told nothin' except a mixed-up story about some savage Injuns attackin' some white man. I didn't know there was a redskin that dared to lift a hand in this section. It's a kind of reflection on me I takes it. I am put yere to preserve order an' if anybody has been raisin' hell without my special permission they're goin' to git it from me."

"They were not Indians," said the girl, turning off the road to a trail leading to the bluff overlooking the river. "They were brown men with black hair and funny clothes. I never saw anything like them before."

"Niggers?"

"No. They were not colored people either."

"Say, Miss Babby," said the sheriff, looking at her keenly in sudden suspicion, "ain't you been out in the sun jest a leetle too long this morning?"

"Don't be foolish, Dempsey. For that matter there hasn't been any sun this morning and there isn't going to be any. See, up there through the trees. Look," she cried, involuntarily checking her horse and pointing upward toward an opening which afforded them a glimpse of the heavens.

The sky was already half covered with heavy clouds, which were sweeping rapidly forward, the other half was still mist-shrouded as it had been all morning. As they both stared, a flash of lightning flamed through the tree tops, followed by a great peal of thunder, which seemed to shake the very foundations of the everlasting hills.

“We’re due for a wettin’, all right,” said Dempsey, “unless we seeks shelter till it passes by. We’d oughta brought our slickers, but you was in sech a hurry. It’ll be one of them sudden summer storms that’s soon over, I takes it. Shall we wait somewheres?”

“We will wait for nothing. What, stop for a little rain,” cried the girl, “with a dying man and a hero at the end of the trail? Are you afraid of catching cold, Dempsey?”

“Now, Miss—” began the sheriff, reproachfully, at this reflection on his manhood.

But Barbara did not hear the conclusion of his remonstrances for two reasons: one, because she shook the reins over her horse’s neck and started rapidly down the trail, the mare having been somewhat refreshed by the more moderate pace, responding gallantly; and two, because all speech was drowned in a sudden torrent of rain, which beat upon them despite the not inconsiderable protection afforded by the thick and interlacing foliage of the

great trees. Careless of the downpour Barbara did not draw rein until, with her faithful cavalier, she burst out of the clearing onto the plateau, which had been the battle ground of a few hours before. Luckily the rain ceased then as suddenly as it had begun. She leaped from her horse, followed by the sheriff, and ran forward to the great tree under which she had left the wounded man. He was no longer there!

She turned and began a search of the wood nearby. Perhaps he had crawled into the thicker growth and had sought shelter from the rain under some more convenient tree. She looked everywhere, assisted by the sheriff, of course, and in vain.

Presently Joe and Dick came up, having unhitched the horses from the wagon, which they left standing in the road, while they rode up the trail with the poles and blankets for a litter. They, too, joined in the search, but like the first pair, unavailingly. They found nothing. The man was not there. Neither in the woods, nor in the clearing, nor below on the bank of the river.

The squall had blown seaward and in that quarter hid everything. It would soon be followed by a greater storm obviously, from the look of things, which made Dempsey anxious to get the girl back to the security of the camp as soon as possible. She was reluctant to leave, naturally. Yet there was no

object in staying longer. The man was gone, there was no doubt about that.

Dempsey looked at her doubtfully, incredulously. She saw and recognized the doubt. She could not dispel it. She could give no explanation. She was as much bewildered as the others.

"Air you sure you seen it all, jes' as you tole us, Miss?" he asked, searchingly.

"Of course," answered the girl. "Do you think me a child? I saw, I tell you, and you saw that my waist was half gone. The rain has washed away some of the blood that stained what's left of it," she went on, opening her jacket as before, "but some of it is still visible."

"Mightn't it be your own?"

"Nonsense! I haven't got a scratch on me. I saw him, I tell you, right there under the big tree. I saw the fight from the hill over there. I couldn't be mistaken."

"You sartainly couldn't a' dreamp all that," observed Joe.

"I didn't. Let us look about again. Search some more. He may have crawled away," she began, "surely he'd leave some trail."

But old Dempsey stopped her. There was nothing more they could do.

"That squall o' rain that come down on us in the woods, it's fell here, too. An' washed out every sign.

Can't find no trails now, even if there ever was one, Miss Babby."

"It hasn't washed out this," suddenly answered the girl, running across the clearing to a heap of leaves, and from beneath a small log, under which it had fallen, plucking Po-Yan-Pen's kris from the ground, and holding it up triumphantly.

"Ain't never seed no knife like that one," said the old frontiersman, glancing at it, and then after examining it critically, he passed it on to others equally ignorant. "But I guess you did see some-thin'," continued Dempsey. "We better take another good look around, mebbe he'll turn up. We'll go farther into the wood."

A search of hours revealed nothing further, however, but the girl would not give it up until the approach of night made it necessary to return to the camp. She rode off full of the mystery and but for the strange curved-bladed knife which she carried thinking, as Dempsey still half believed, that she might have imagined it all.

As it was, the odd fierce-looking knife was a bit of incontrovertible evidence. That kris and her recollection of the man were the sole reminders of the most exciting day in her life. And the man interested her the more, naturally. She thought about him constantly, wishing that she could know not only his story—which must be a tremendous one—but the

The Testimony of the Curved Blade

man himself, who she felt must be of a character to measure up to the story. She had seen him fight. He had kissed her hand. His blood had been upon her. She thrilled to these recollections.

CHAPTER III

SHOWS WHAT THE "CAMBODIA" FOUND ON THE DERELICT
SHE OVERHAULED

THE morning was raw and cold. Traces of the heavy rain which had preceded and followed the three days of hard gales still lingered in the wet, mist-laden air, although the sudden and violent storm had fairly spent itself the night before. The old salts, the weather sharps, aboard the armed merchant ship *Cambodia* confidently declared that the sun, now on the point of rising, would soon dispel the mist and that a fair day would follow the foul ones. The old-fashioned swinging "glass" bore out their predictions, for the mercury was steadily, if slowly, climbing up the tube.

When day broke, however, the huge steel freighter, crammed with cargo to the hatches, was still adrip with lingering rain, slowly fining down to a heavy mist which the gentle, but variable breeze, the tail of the dying storm, blew about the decks in fitful wantonness. Water beaded upon every iron stay and shroud. Amid the thick fog the watch from below in heavy oilskins, relieved the one on deck since midnight, as eight bells was struck forward. The look-

outs were carefully posted and straitly charged to keep their weather eyes lifting—inferentially their lee eyes as well! In such a fog it would not do to take any chances. And the prophecies of fair weather had not yet been realized. The young watch officer on the bridge forward was equally alert, as became his position.

If anything had been needed to stimulate all to strict attention to duty the appearance of the master of the ship, also armed in oilskins, sou'wester and rubber boots for the weather, would have supplied it. Captain Murray was not uneasy as to his ship, nor did he lack confidence in his officers. He had kept the deck personally during the heavy blow, snatching a few hours below when the wind finally moderated a little, being relieved in his supervision by the first officer; or as Captain Murray, an old-fashioned, deep-water seaman, was wont to call him, not altogether to his liking—the mate! That gentleman, one Samuel Jedbury, had gone below with the watch off at four in the morning leaving the deck, the ship, the crew, and the cargo—the *Cambodia* carried no passengers, at least on that trip—to the care of Mr. Safford, the second officer, an entirely competent young mariner, already in possession of his master's certificate, who greeted his skipper cheerily, but respectfully, on his arrival on the high bridge.

“ You’re keeping a bright lookout, Mr. Safford? ” observed the captain.

“ Yes, sir. Best hands in the watch for’ard and in the crow’s nest aloft. Mr. Dawley ”—the fourth officer, a young seaman, who stood his watch with the second—“ makes the rounds of the ship every quarter hour, and when he’s not busy at that he stands his watch for’ard, sir.”

“ Very good, sir,” said the older man, nodding his approval. “ You can’t be too careful in such a thick mist as hangs about us now. We’re in what used to be one of the ocean lanes before the war and it’s not likely we’re alone there even now. The fog thins a bit, I think? ”

“ Aye, sir, it does. It must be quite clear aloft. The glass is rising. As soon as the sun gets fairly up, we shall see him again, I’m sure, especially if the breeze holds.”

“ Very like. Meanwhile relax none of your vigilance, sir. I’ve known more than one good ship lost by collision or by running down a derelict in just such weather as this, with all hands easing up a little after a long strain, and——”

But the old man’s reminiscence was cut short abruptly. Lookouts are no respecters of persons.

“ Sail ho! ” was the cry that dropped down through the heavy air from the man on the stumpy cargo foremast forward.

"Where away?" cried Mr. Safford, quickly stepping over to the Chadburn signal and grasping the shifting lever, ready for any action.

His cry rang over the decks, and arrested attention. Men stopped to look and listen. His voice even penetrated to the engine room through the fiddley hatch and awoke the engineer on watch, his assistants, and the machinists to the probable necessity of instant response to some signal from the bridge above. The captain stepped to the forward side of the bridge and leaning over the rail with its canvas shield triced above it, stared up at the lookout. He could be seen quite plainly from the bridge, because the fog, or mist, was visibly thinning as it settled down to the surface of the sea, and the heavens above were already filled with welcome sunlight.

"About two points off the sta'bord bow, sir," answered the lookout, leaning over the rail of the crow's nest and pointing in the indicated direction with outstretched arm.

"Can you make her out?" asked Mr. Safford again, while every other man on the decks looked into the fog, and listened for any sound from the vessel reported—seeing and hearing nothing, by the way.

"Yes, sir. I can see her quite plain through a rift in the fog. She's a small schooner dismasted, almost awash, about a half a mile off."

"Any signs of life aboard her?" asked the watch officer, greatly relieved.

There was little to be feared from any schooner. In collision with such a vessel the huge freighter would cut through her like a knife through cheese, and those aboard the *Cambodia* would scarcely know they had hit anything. That small and helpless derelict could do them no harm in that weather, for all the heavy rollers that lingered in the wake of the mad commotion of the tempest.

"No, sir, leastways I've not seen—she's gone, sir!" answered the man aloft.

"Sunk!" roared the officer.

"I don't think so, sir. Fog's closed down again. There she is once more. No, she's gone again."

Mr. Safford turned to the captain with an inquiring look. The master of the ship anticipated his words with an order.

"Slow down, sir. Keep the ship under bare steerageway. There's not much likelihood that anybody is on a wrecked schooner awash in these seas, after the gales we've gone through, but there might be. The fog is going. We'll find out in half an hour."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Mr. Safford, shifting the lever to the proper signal on the Chadburn indicator.

Bells jangled below. The engines were promptly slowed down and presently, her greater momentum

spent, the *Cambodia* slowly surged ahead through the huge seas which still rolled over the ocean surface — aftermath of the preceding storm. The captain walked to the extreme starboard end of the bridge and stared out into the rapidly thinning fog through his high-powered glass. Presently, as the mist was dissipated, he caught a glimpse of the wrecked schooner, rolling helplessly awash in the trough of the seas. In obedience to a wave of the captain's hand, Mr. Safford directed the quartermaster to shift the helm and the huge prow of the freighter was soon pointed directly toward the derelict.

Again bells jangled below and the *Cambodia* presently brought to with the wreck under her lee, about half a cable's length from the starboard gangway. Eager eyes forward and aft along the rails as well as from the high bridge, scrutinized the derelict.

They saw a small, badly wrecked schooner, both masts gone, stumps of foremast and bowsprit forward, nothing aft. The schooner that had been flew no flag, of course. Her decks had been swept clean by the heavy seas.

It was easy to picture her adventures. Caught with her canvas on her the masts had gone. She had broached to and had become the plaything of the storm. Why she had not foundered was a mystery. From her sluggish rise and fall, as she wallowed

helplessly and inertly in the trough of the sea, she seemed to be filled with water.

There was a queer, foreign look to her, perhaps due to her odd weatherbeaten paint and to some vestiges of rude barbaric ornament around her bows and aft on her quarters, faded gilding of which they caught glimpses between the seas that sometimes even yet broke over her. She looked incredibly old and weatherworn.

"Call away a quarter boat, Mr. Safford," said the captain to his expectant junior. "Let Mr. Dawley go and have a look at her. There's a trunk cabin aft that might hold someone still alive."

As Mr. Safford turned to give the necessary orders, Mr. Jedbury came up on the bridge, attired in his pajamas, over which he had put on a heavy coat. He and the captain, who condescended to a little more familiar intercourse with his chief subordinate than with his junior officers, discussed the stranger.

"Looks to me, Mr. Jedbury," began the master, acknowledging the other's salutation, "as if she might have come from the Straits Settlements. I've seen her like down Malacca way often."

"I could not sleep below, sir, caught a glimpse of her through the air port of my cabin. She's got a foreign look somehow, though her lines are good enough," answered the other with critical appraisal.

"Some English or American bottom that's been

made over by Malays. Here, take a look at her through the glass," continued the master, handing the binoculars to the mate, who focused them rapidly and fixed them on the wreck.

"Yes, sir, I believe you're right," assented the first officer, returning the glass. "But what's she doing here within a few days' sail of the North American coast, I wonder?"

"We'll know soon, or never," answered the captain. "Young Dawley's just getting aboard her. Handles the boat well, too, for a youngster."

In fact, Mr. Dawley had just boarded the derelict, having brought his cutter alongside with an address and skill that promised well for high rank ultimately in his chosen profession.

The two officers on the end of the *Cambodia's* bridge, with Mr. Safford hovering in the background, watched Mr. Dawley, after a brief and profitless look about him, turn and make his way, with some difficulty, across the tossing schooner's flooded deck, with nothing to afford him any assistance, since not a spar or rail was standing. He stooped and disappeared from their view through the companionway leading into the trunk cabin, which had survived the wash of the stormy seas.

Presently they saw his head emerging from the hatchway. He paid no attention to the steamer and its eager watchers, but hailed the cutter. In obedi-

ence to his commands she was again brought deftly alongside by her coxswain, a veteran seaman of the old school—who remarked proudly to the stroke oarsman that “he wouldn’t a cracked an egg with that ’ere touch”—and one of the men, unshipping his oar, rose in the boat and watching his chance, leaped aboard and followed his officer into the cabin.

In a few moments both of them reappeared, carrying between them the inert, helpless body of a man. He hung between the two seamen a heavy, sagging mass, giving no sign of life, apparently.

“Yet, he must be alive,” observed the captain, voicing the thoughts of all of them. “Mr. Dawley would not take the risk otherwise.”

“Never saw anybody look deader, sir,” answered Mr. Jedbury, who had resorted to the binoculars again for a better view. “He’s white, though of that I’m certain.”

Meantime Mr. Dawley and the seaman carried the man across the deck to the lee side and carefully watching and timing their movements with the leeward roll of the wreck and an upward rise of the cutter they got the man into the boat, the crew receiving him and gently, but skilfully, easing him down in the stern sheets, where the young seaman at once followed him, resumed his place on his thwart and again broke out his oar. Mr. Dawley was not yet ready to leave, for he returned to the cabin again.

"There can't be another one?" exclaimed the first officer.

"No, Mr. Dawley would have kept that seaman with him. He's probably gone below to find out what more he can," observed the more experienced master.

Presently the young officer again reappeared, empty-handed, called the cutter to him, and boarded her once more.

"Mr. Safford," said the captain, as he observed the cutter being vigorously rowed back toward the steamer, "get all ready to hook on. Have the falls manned and make a quick run of it, I don't want a stove boat in these seas."

"Very good, sir," answered Mr. Safford. "And shall I go ahead then?"

"Not until I get Mr. Dawley's report, sir," replied the master. "Come, Mr. Jedbury, we'll go to the gangway and meet 'em. One of you step below and call the doctor—" this last to a group of men abreast the funnel.

One of them saluted and ran aft. By the time the surgeon, for the *Cambodia* carried such an officer in those critical war times, appeared in some slight dishabille, owing to his haste in obeying his captain's summons, Mr. Dawley was mounting the side battens toward the gangway, while the boat tackles were being hooked on and the cutter was smartly swung up to the davits.

“ Handsomely done, Mr. Dawley,” began Captain Murray, with generous approval. “ What did you find, sir? ”

“ Thank you, sir. Nothing, sir, but an unconscious man, apparently dying,” answered the young officer, scarcely concealing his pleasure in the public and hearty acknowledgment of his captain. “ He was lying in an upper berth in the trunk cabin, which is half full of water. At first I thought he was dead, but he is still living, or was, when we shipped him aboard the cutter.”

“ Very good. Doctor, will you look after him? Take him into the spare berth off my cabin. I’ll join you presently. Now, Mr. Dawley,” continued the master, “ did you learn nothing else? ”

“ Nothing, sir. The cabin was as bare as the palm of my hand. The hulk is full of water and appeared to be pretty empty of anything else from the glimpses I got of it. If she ever had a name it’s been washed off, though as we passed astern of her I did make out some letters, but what they signified I’ve no idea.”

“ What were they? Perhaps I may have an idea where you have none,” went on the captain, a little severely.

“ Yes, sir,” promptly responded Mr. Dawley, correspondingly subdued, realizing that it was up to him to give facts and let the captain draw his own

conclusions. "The letters were A, P, then a break followed by R and E."

"Singapore!" exclaimed the master, turning to Mr. Jedbury. "You see! I was right!"

Mr. Jedbury had also been right, but he thought it best to say nothing. It was not for him to dispute honors with his superiors, or attempt to play the I-told-you-so game with the skipper. He merely nodded at his gratified senior, who turned and addressed Mr. Safford, above them on the bridge.

"Get on your course again, sir. Send the crew to that gun aft and put a few shells into the wreck. She's little, but even a small derelict is a danger, especially to a small ship. Sink her and then full speed. We must make up for lost time."

As the gun's crew delightedly swarmed aft to one of the two six-inch guns mounted on the freighter for her protection, to perform their congenial task and get a little gun practice, the captain said to the first officer, more genially than before:

"Come with me, Jedbury, my steward will have some breakfast prepared presently, if you will join me, and we may find out something about our passenger. I may need you."

As they entered the spacious main cabin of the captain's quarters, the big gun boomed out overhead. Within the small room to port the newcomer opened his eyes at the sound, and the ministering surgeon

bending over him caught these strange and mystifying words, uttered brokenly and at lengthening intervals:

“That — damned — Po-Yan-Pen — woman — angel — too ——”

The voice died away, the eyes closed. What did, or could, the words mean? Po-Yan-Pen, whatever else he had been, was certainly never an angel. He had gone where angels are not supposed to be—at least, not good ones.

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE MASTER OF THE "CAMBODIA" SHREWDLY
GUESSED AT THE TRUTH FROM THE RAVINGS
OF THE CASTAWAY

AS THE breakfast hour had already passed there was little delay in serving it from the galley, but when the table was spread for three and the doctor summoned from the castaway's room, the steward brought back a message from the medical man that he could not yet leave his patient, and they were not to wait for him. So the captain and the first officer breakfasted alone. After the meal had been served the steward went forward and brought back the surgeon's mate, whom the doctor summoned to his assistance. Evidently things were in a bad way with the man they had rescued.

It was not until after they had finished their breakfast and the first officer had gone about his multifarious morning business with ship and crew that the surgeon reentered the main cabin. He had a strange story to tell to the interested master of the ship over his own late and hasty breakfast.

"How's the patient?" began the captain.

"In a bad way, sir; I might say a very bad way."

“Starved, eh?”

“No, not quite. He hasn’t been long enough without food for that, I take it. He has been wounded.”

“Wounded?”

“His upper left shoulder has been slashed to the bone. There is a deep cut on his left side. He has been hit over the head, which is badly contused and swollen, and there are numerous other small wounds, in themselves of little moment, but taken with the others they make up a serious total. His clothes are cut to pieces.”

“Any bullet wounds?”

“None. He seems to have been the victim of a knife attack. Curious wounds some of them are too, not clean cuts, but rough, jagged. I never saw the like.”

“Is he conscious?” asked the captain, stowing away this last curious fact for further consideration.

The doctor shook his head over his coffee cup.

“Will he die?”

“It will be touch and go. He is out of his head now, and he is running a temperature of 105. I should say he has had little or no food or water for three or four days, and that with the inflammation of his unattended wounds, which must be very painful, and the terrible loss of blood, together with the exposure, have brought him to a sorry pass.”

“Then, you think——”

The old man paused expectantly.

“I will pull him through, if no complications set in, sir.”

“There is likelihood of that?”

“You never can tell, sir. There is one thing in his favor, a splendid physique.”

“In the meantime we know nothing about him?”

“Exactly.”

“And we can find out nothing?”

“Not until he recovers consciousness and tells his story, sir.”

“Well, we ought to make Honolulu in five days. If he is alive then we’ll put him in the hospital and let them fix him up; meaning no reflection on your professional ability, Doctor,” added the captain, quickly.

“Of course, I understand,” returned the doctor, smiling as he drained the last of his coffee and set the cup down, indicating that he had finished his hurried meal. He rose to return to the cabin of the castaway, barely anticipating a hurried summons from his assistant.

“He is raving mad, sir,” said the man from the doorway. “Wants to get up, he is amazing strong.”

The doctor hurried into the cabin, followed by the captain, whose curiosity was naturally aroused. The master of the *Cambodia* was no physician, but he had not arrived at his present command without acquir-

ing a wide knowledge of men. His experience had also given him both keen and rapid judgment. A successful sailor must, of necessity, be a thinker, both quick and correct. His life and his ship depend upon his possession of those qualities. He did not look at the man in the berth from a medical viewpoint, but as a judge of men. He studied him closely.

The patient was sitting up. His eyes glowed with fever and the same cause had brought a vivid color to his thin and haggard cheeks, which was plainly visible even underneath the thick growth of unkempt ragged beard. He was pointing and moving restlessly. He strongly resisted the efforts of the doctor to get him to lie down.

Captain Murray instantly decided that here was no sailor, albeit he had been found alone upon a ship and there was that about him which showed him accustomed to command. He wore no uniform, his rough clothes, slashed, torn, grimy, told nothing, but he looked like a man of presence and power. The captain made a shrewd guess and set him down as an engineer, English or American without doubt, and at the first word the man spoke it was evident that he was not English.

“Seymour,” he said, shaking off the doctor’s hand, and addressing some person unknown to the men in the cabin, “we’ve got to get away tonight. Ivan says these damned blackguards will be here in



He pointed again. "Water, there's the river, we'll make it. Saved!"

five hours. Get the sledges out. Quick! Load them with what we've got. Can't wait for any more. If we can ever get it to the United States it will be worth millions to the government. It must be getting terribly scarce. Yes, it's a pity to leave so much, but we must do the best we can. I'll pick out the men to be trusted. Hurry!"

His voice died away, his muscles relaxed and under the doctor's gentle pressure he sank back on the pillow and lay still. He had spoken rapidly, as if under intense pressure and with few or no breaks. It was all plain and coherent enough, but lacking clue or key it did not help them much.

"I can make little of it," said the doctor.

"It is evident," returned the captain, "that he was coming from some place to the United States, I should say from the letters on the boat's stern and her other markings, from somewhere on the Malay Peninsula."

"But, what is there of such value to the United States on the Malay Peninsula, and why any necessity for secrecy?"

"Well perhaps he came from further inland and had with him——"

"God!" cried the man, desperately, suddenly sitting up again, "how damned hot it is. Unless we can reach the river we'll die here in this ghastly desert and the country will never get it. What's that?"

Yes, I can. You'll take his load? No, you've got enough to carry, Seymour. The rest are all in, brave fellows."

He looked around the cabin, intense anxiety almost fear on his face. They could guess what he was seeing, certainly not the four walls of the little room. He went on:

"The river should lie there about ten miles farther on. We've got to, boy. Yes, we might as well kill these poor brutes as leave them to die in this desert. Here, put it on the one sledge and we men will tail onto the ropes. Get busy, Ivan." Suddenly his voice rose in a scream. He pointed again. "Water, there's the river, we'll make it. Saved!"

He fell back again and this time lay muttering.

"You see?" said the captain, as the man's wild words seemed to confirm his guess.

The doctor nodded.

"I think I shall give him an opiate," he said.

It was soon prepared, but before he could drink it the man knocked it away.

"My God!" he said, striving to spring from the bed, "they are on us, shoot them down, now! If we only had our good, faithful Russians. Damn these cowardly native bearers. Herd 'em into the ravine yonder, Seymour, and hold 'em while I scatter this riffraff. Give me your automatic."

The doctor strove to hold still the fearfully excited

man, but, as might have been expected, he displayed amazing strength, which required all the physician's power to overcome.

"Mountains, mountains, everywhere," he ran on. "God, how cold it is! Snow. Ice. Let him lie, poor devil. He's dead, after that awful fall. We can't do anything more for him. Give me his pack, I'll carry double again for a while. Once we get down to the lowlands it will be easy going, in the big river. Be careful of that ice and snow."

"He must have that sleeping draught," said the doctor. "He can't stand much more of this. He's burning up, too." He nodded to his assistant, who prepared and poured out another potion.

As he bent with it the man spoke again, but more quietly this time.

"No, Seymour," he said, "I won't appeal to anybody. I don't trust this Malay crowd. I have chartered a schooner. You are sailor enough to carry her across the Pacific. I am navigator as well as engineer. We've brought it half across the world ourselves, we'll take it the rest of the way. No, I won't drink it;" he shook his head as the doctor again proffered medicine. "I won't drink anything I don't prepare myself," he repeated. "There may be poison in it. I don't trust these Lascars and Malays. They have done for poor Seymour, the best boy I ever worked with. They said it was an acci-

dent, but I know. That damned Po-Yan-Pen! Just two more days! We ought to make a landfall somewhere out of this storm. Stop there! If one of you comes abaft the wheel, without my permission, I'll shoot him dead. You understand?" He added a few words in a strange language.

"Malay talk," said Captain Murray. "I don't understand it, but I recognize it."

The stranger went on in a quieter, more solemn tone.

"We, therefore, commit his body to the deep." He nodded his head and waited. It was quite evident to them that he had launched poor Seymour overboard with the familiar time-honored words of prayer. His voice changed again. "Now, get forward," he said abruptly.

Once again the doctor offered him the glass. This time the man gently put it aside.

"Not yet," he said. "I've got work to do. Put it there in that cave, cover it up with that rock. Put the leaves and grass back. You will, will you?" he suddenly screamed passionately. "Well, by God, you will see that one white man is a match for the whole Malay Peninsula! Damn you." His voice fell to a whisper again. "Yes, Miss, it was a good fight. Water, that's all I want." He looked up at the doctor. "She was an angel of mercy," he added, very softly.

The Ravings of the Castaway

The physician was quick to seize the moment. Again he proffered the glass and this time the man swallowed the draught, then drank deeply from a cup of water.

“Thank you,” he said. “Poor Seymour, he was a man—and the woman was good, too! Well, Po-Yan-Pen paid.” He muttered to himself for a few moments, but incoherently, his head fell back on the pillow, then his eyes closed. He was asleep.

The doctor rose.

“Will he be himself when he wakes up?” asked the captain.

“I can’t tell, sir, but not likely. He is in for a long siege of it. Until the fever breaks he won’t be able to tell us anything.”

“Well, he has been through enough, apparently,” said the master, “to kill an ordinary man. He’s in your care, Doctor. Do the best you can for him. I’ll see if I can make something out of his story.”

That day at dinner the captain, who had thought deeply on the revelations of the delirious man, set forth his conclusions to his first officer and the surgeon in this way:

“He got something out of Russia. Gold probably, which the Germans were after, through treacherous Russians, who favored them in the revolutions, and he and the chap named Seymour carried it down through the desert of Turkestan and over the Hima-

layas and down one of the Indian rivers, and got it to the Malay Peninsula somehow, on their way to the United States. They got hold of that schooner with a Malay crew. Seymour sailed her while this man looked after the navigation."

Mr. Jedbury nodded, it certainly sounded logical and convincing.

"He is no sailor man, you can see that with half an eye," went on the old shipmaster. Although just how he arrived at that conclusion he could not say. "But he knew enough navigation to find his way across. Probably he is a civil engineer," he added shrewdly. "Those fellows have got to know how to take sights and handle a sextant. The Lascars or Malays killed Seymour by treachery and this chap buried him at sea. As for the rest——"

"I suppose they mutinied and got him," interrupted the doctor.

"It is possible, but I hardly think so. I think they must have made a landfall somewhere on the Pacific Coast; probably he was not a very expert navigator and he was lucky to hit America anywhere, especially in the fog and storm. Then, I take it they buried the stuff, whatever it was, and after that I can't do better than a wild guess at what happened. There is certainly a woman mixed up in it somewhere. Whenever there's trouble there generally is," concluded the old salt, who was a bit of a misogynist.

The mate, who had listened intently, now ventured on a shrewd suggestion.

“ Suppose after they buried the stuff the Malays attacked him. Suppose some woman came to his rescue in the nick of time.”

“ Yes, that’s ingenious enough, but it doesn’t account for his presence alone on that wreck. There was no evidence of a woman about, was there? ”

“ Not the slightest, sir,” answered the mate. “ I have had Dawley and the seaman that boarded the schooner before me, since you told me what he said, and they saw nothing to indicate that a woman had ever been there.”

“ Well, gentlemen,” said the captain, “ I have made some calculations, and the place where we picked her up would be just about where a dismasted schooner out of control would have drifted in the hard gales, if she left the American coast four days before. I guess we’ll have to let it go at that,” he concluded. “ If the man comes to himself before he dies, or if he lives, he’ll have to tell us the story. We have done pretty well as it is, I think.”

And, as a matter of fact, they had.

CHAPTER V

WHERE MISS BARBARA LE MOYNE MADE A GUN PLAY AND
A MISTAKE

HAD it not been for her stained and torn waist, and above all, for the wicked looking Malay kris, with its curved blade and obliquely set handle, which was tangible evidence not to be rejected or explained away, Dempsey would have been unable to credit Barbara's amazing assertions. Indeed, he only half accepted them as it was. The affair was unbelievable. There was nothing mysterious about the Northwest Coast or the wood that bordered it. True, the country was, as yet, sparsely settled and masterless men, fugitives from justice, had used it as a city of refuge, or had made the attempt in the past and doubtless would do so still; but the endeavor had grown increasingly dangerous, largely, in fact entirely, because of Dempsey and his posse, who had taken the matter vigorously in hand. They patrolled the woods and shore under the auspices, both of the local government and the great timber barons, who owned the woods, and other would-be exploiters of the natural resources of the rich territory still in large sections virgin to the touch of man.

The Indians surviving were scattered and few in number. That they would make such an attempt upon a white man was so improbable as to be unthinkable. Besides, Barbara had said they were not Indians, nor were they Negroes, who were even fewer in number in the section than Indians. Neither would Indian nor Negro nor white man have used a weapon like that knife.

Dempsey had taken it back to the settlement on the railroad on one of his trips for supplies. No one there knew any more about it than he did. He had returned it to Barbara with that confession. She stoutly maintained the absolute accuracy of her observation and experience, despite Dempsey's obvious endeavor to explain it away, which was as difficult as it was to believe it.

It did not occur to Dempsey, which was not strange, because he was a man of no great imagination, that the actors in the tragedy might have come from the sea and that the sole survivor might have departed as he came; nor did that occur to Barbara either, which was strange, because she had highly developed imagination—too highly developed Dempsey would have urged.

One thing that made Dempsey incredulous was the fact that there was no sign left of the encounter. Current and tide had carried the bodies out to sea with the schooner. It must have been a woman's

dream. Yet, the torn bloodstained waist, the curious knife! They ceased to discuss it. Yet, he did not forget it. After all, perhaps it was true. If it were, the fact that it had happened in his jurisdiction touched his professional pride and reputation nearly. He had searched the place again, barely escaping the discovery of Po-Yan-Pen's body, which had been caught on a spur of rock and had rolled under a clump of stunted tree-growth which hid it, and would continue to do so, until the winter change came and the small thick branches were bared.

Two weeks after all this Dempsey received a call to duty on the eve of breaking camp, for Barbara Le Moyne now heard the call of civilization, as she had before heard the call of the wild. In fact, life had been so uneventful, after that wild morning's work by the sea, that its monotony had palled upon her and she was anxious to get back home. On the morning of the very day appointed for their departure Dempsey got word of a killing that had been committed in a town some miles down the railroad, and was informed by the messenger, who brought a warrant, that it was believed that the murderer had sought temporary concealment in that section of the country, which was in his charge.

Posses were out in the country below and it was suggested that Dempsey and the men with him might beat up the woods in their vicinity. The rankling

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recollection of the other unpunished and unsolved crime made Dempsey the more anxious to attempt this. But there were Barbara and his wife to be considered. The decision was Barbara's. She was more than willing, indeed anxious, that he and the men should take up the search, only she decided on riding with the posse.

Knowing her determined and energetic nature, Dempsey concluded it just as well to allow her to have her way as to leave her with his wife in the camp under the guard of one of the older men. If she went with him she would be under his observation and protection and it was not likely that she would be able to attempt anything on her own account. If he left her alone God only could know what she would do. Since her last adventure he had grown more and more unwilling to let her out of his sight.

But the Dempseys of this world propose and the Barbaras thereof dispose—meaning no irreverence, heaven forbid, by the paraphrase! Dempsey's hopes and plans were defeated. In the excitement of the man-hunt Barbara cunningly managed to separate herself from the rest of the party. She was an unusual young woman and she decided she would do a little man-hunting on her own account; not at all after the ordinary way of her sex in pursuit of the other, by the way. There was, she thought, little to be feared. Even if she met the fugitive he probably

would not molest her, and unless fortune favored her with unusual advantages she would certainly attempt nothing against him. She had no particular cause or reason to ride toward the cañon through which the trail to the station led. Yet, she did it.

She rode cheerfully enough through the rolling hills toward the rift through which she intended to pass. There had been a heavy rain the night before, but the morning was fresh and beautiful. Everything about her was lovely; the wild beauty of the cañon, the great trees, the wild flowers in rich profusion, enchanted her. She was alone in the wild. She forgot all about the criminal she was supposed to be on the lookout for as she rode leisurely along in the gay morning. Joy was in her heart. Sometimes she lifted her voice in song as she cantered along. As she approached the descent the trail grew more rough, winding through rocks and ravines. She decided she would go to the town, since she was so near it, and let Dempsey break camp and bring her personal baggage after her later in the day.

Slackening her pace perforce as she rounded a huge boulder, she was confronted by a man on horseback. There would have been nothing alarming in such a meeting had not a heavy revolver in the hands of the man been pointed directly at her heart. She stopped instantly. The man, as much surprised as she apparently, slightly smiled, shifted the gun to

his other hand, swept his big "Stetson" from his head in one time and three motions. The doffed felt hat disclosed a crop of blond curly hair crowning a face handsome enough if somehow not altogether winning despite the smiling mouth and bright blue eyes. He did not look like the typical desperado or murderer, nevertheless Barbara jumped to a conclusion, natural enough under the circumstances, especially since the man had her covered by his gun.

In appearance the man seemed to her excited stare to correspond exactly to the careful description of the criminal which had been furnished them, and which she had studied with Dempsey before they started on the hunt. It was not her game to betray any knowledge of the man or that she knew he was being searched for, but despite herself his name, or what she believed was his name, jumped to her lips.

"You are Warneton!" she exclaimed, and could have bitten her tongue out for her imprudence immediately after.

"And if I am?" laughed the stranger.

The impression he now made upon her was even more unfavorable than at first. His lips smiled more definitely than his eyes, she decided. There was a certain hard look in them despite their blueness and brightness. There were lines in his face that seemed to indicate cruelty, sternness. He might well have committed murder, she thought. Barbara Le Moyne

decided later that these indications were not there after all; that only her suspicions of his criminal character had made her see them. But for the moment they bulked large.

She had indeed made some vague plans as to what she should do if she met the murderer, but they had vanished in this actual confrontation. Besides, he had got the drop on her. There was no disputing that gun pointing directly at her and held without a tremor—an iron-nerved man, obviously, no matter what his character. There seemed left to her no rôle to play but that of a fugitive, and she was quite certain that even that was impossible. A shot would bring her down before her horse could make a second jump. Yet despite the danger she recklessly attempted it.

Quick as thought Barbara wheeled her pony and spurred him hard. The man mercifully withheld his fire. He did better. For all his amusement he had kept her under his eye, and in two bounds his horse was at her horse's head on the narrow trail.

“Where are you going?” he asked quickly, laying a restraining hand on the bridle of her horse.

“Naturally, knowing your reputation, I was going to put as much distance between us as possible,” she answered recklessly, believing that she had betrayed herself beyond repair, and concealment of her knowledge of him was no longer possible nor necessary.

“I can’t allow that,” said the man, smiling at her in a way which did something to diminish her apprehension, but by no means altogether dissipated it. “A few questions, please. You were headed this way. I presume you are going to the station?”

“I don’t recognize your right to question me.”

“Nevertheless, you would better answer,” he said compellingly.

“Well, I was.”

“Good. I shall do myself the honor of escorting you there,” was his ambiguous observation.

Now Barbara had heard that Warneton, who was reputed to be a professional gambler, was a man of some education. But she was surprised to find how much truth there was in the rumor. For on that morning his manner and words were alike unexceptionable. They surprised her. Before she could answer he went on.

“The trail is wide and, if you please, we will ride side by side.”

“You are the master,” said the girl. “I suppose there is nothing to do but obey your commands.”

“Nothing. How did you know who I was?” he asked her, smiling again as they rode down the trail.

“The er—description, you know. It was sent to the sheriff. They are after you—you must know that,” she answered.

“Just so,” answered the man, with another laugh. “Someone is generally after me.”

“Why you should wish to escort me to the station I don’t know,” she said.

“Well, it’s just conceivable that you might run into some member of my—er—band, who might not appreciate beauty in distress and who would not treat you as well as I.”

“I didn’t know you had a band. The messenger told Dempsey that you were alone,” was her surprised answer.

“Oh, I’ve a number of followers,” was the careless reply. “By the way, who is this Dempsey?”

“You will find that out when he catches you,” answered the girl, confidently.

The man laughed at her assurance. He seemed to be enjoying the situation much more than she.

“Do you think I am any worse than the rest of mankind?” he asked.

“Certainly I do. Didn’t you kill a man down at Wellsville?”

“Unfortunately, I have had to kill many men in my time,” answered the man indifferently, “but the particular man at—ah—Wellsville escapes my recollection.”

“Impossible. Why, it only happened yesterday,” cried the girl, indignant at this careless, cold-blooded way of treating so dreadful an affair.

“And I certainly don’t recall killing anybody at all yesterday,” continued the man in the same vein.

The flippancy jarred upon her. She had now no more doubt as to his criminality than that she was completely in his power.

“I don’t believe I shall go to the station after all,” she said suddenly, to test him.

“I am afraid you will have to,” he replied, a little sternly. “With a crowd of desperadoes, Warneton’s band you know, at large, it really is not safe for you to be here alone.”

Certainly there was truth in that statement, she thought. Her present situation proved it!

“Bad as I may be, as you must think me, I don’t intend you any harm,” he went on; “therefore, I propose to escort you to the station. Upon my word of honor, nothing more, nothing less.”

“The honor of a desperado, a gambler, a thief, a confessed murderer, not once but many times!”

“It seems to me,” was the unexpected answer, “that you are a young woman of extraordinary courage.”

“Why?”

“To recall to my attention the enormities of which I am — er — supposed to be guilty when you are — er — supposed to be in my power.”

“Supposed?” queried the woman, scornfully.

“Not even the devil is as black as he is painted,” expostulated the man, mildly.

“Your reputation could be lightened by much and still be dark enough. Didn’t you say you had killed many men?” returned the girl, somewhat recovering her courage as this strange conversation was carried on; “and as for fear, I’m afraid of no man on earth,” she added, giving him no time to reply to her question.

It seemed to her that the best way to carry off this adventure and to extricate herself from the frightful consequences that might so easily come upon her was to keep up a stout heart and show a brave front. Besides, the newcomer was so polite and considerate, and he was so obviously amused with the situation, his manner was so friendly and agreeable, there was not even a sign of a threat in his voice or bearing; he was somehow so strangely different from what she had expected, that she could not but feel a certain amount of confidence in the outcome.

“Let us talk about something else,” said the man, after a little pause.

“I have no wish to talk about anything to you, sir.”

“Most wonderful of women!” he ejaculated, mockingly yet not bitterly nor unpleasantly, “who, being given a chance to talk, prefers silence! But being a desperate man and all those other things, as you said,

and as you admit you are completely in my power, perhaps it would be better not to disturb my pleasant mood—which is not usually so agreeable—therefore, it would be good policy to humor me a little. If reputation does not belie me, you can guess how unpleasant I can be on occasion.”

“You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink; so you may invite a woman to speech, but you can’t make her talk,” was her bold reply.

“I will only entreat her to do so,” returned the stranger. “It is many miles to the station. We shall have a long ride together. What could be more pleasant than to beguile the tedium of our journey by an interchange of ideas? What, for instance, do you think of the political status of women in the Northwest?”

This was a surprising question and suggestion. Yet after all, why not talk with the man since she had to ride with him? Surely she would be under no disadvantage in a conversation. He certainly could do her no harm while they talked together. The amazing proposition had its advantages. Besides, this was a subject upon which Barbara had thought deeply. Like every other ardent advocate, she would fain make disciples for her creed. Even Warneton was not to be disdained. He was at least a male! She launched forth, answering his questions, parrying his

arguments, for he naturally took the other side, matching wit with wit and repartee with repartee, and quite forgetting in the excitement of the debate that he was a murderer and she his prisoner. Which was not surprising because, as a rule, women forget everything else in a discussion of that subject!

"All this is most interesting," said the stranger at last; "but we shall have to break off the conversation for a few moments. The trail has been ruined by a washout below here. I found it impassable for horses when I came up it this morning."

"Must we then return?"

"By no means. There is a long hogback over yonder which is practicable for a horse, although difficult. If you have the courage, and if your horse is accustomed to climbing, we can cut off a mile or so, rejoin the trail beyond the break, and it will be plain sailing after that."

"I have both nerve and horse," said the girl.

"And they are both evident," returned the stranger, in a bold admiration which she was not able on the instant to decide was agreeable or not to her.

"Very well. Will you lead?"

"Yes; and when we have passed the hogback and got on the trail again, shall we resume the conversation?"

"As you please."

"All you have to do is to follow me exactly."

A Gun Play and a Mistake

“I shall do so.”

With a wave of his hand, the man rode his horse up the steep acclivity by the side of the trail until he reached a long, narrow ridge which crossed a ravine several hundred feet deep. Evidently this ridge had been terminal moraine in the glacial period. It was broad at first, but it narrowed just where it rose above the deepest part of the gorge to a space just wide enough for a single horse to pass carefully. From the narrows it fell away with steep abruptness on both sides.

“Ride slowly and carefully,” cried the stranger, looking back at the following woman as he reached the danger point. “Once you’ve passed here the going will be easy.”

It was a desperately difficult space to get over, and to pass it the undivided attention of horse and rider were required. After that backward look the stranger bent his head to the trail and gathered up the reins. He had got halfway across when a sharp, shrill voice, entirely different in tone from that which had so pleased him before, broke into his consciousness.

“Hands up or I fire!”

To obey was impossible. He had to go on. A halt or check or any other movement would have startled his horse and the result would have been a fall of several hundred feet, which meant sure death.

“Wait until I get to the other side,” he cried, and even as the woman behind him shouted, “No, now,” the passage was made.

He wheeled his horse, threw up his hands, and found the positions of a short time before exactly reversed. The woman had checked her horse right on the brink of the narrow bridge, so to speak, and a revolver held in a hand which, while it trembled a little from excitement, was sufficiently steady to be dangerous, was pointed directly at him.

CHAPTER VI

AND THE SUPPOSED CRIMINAL TURNS OUT TO BE "AN
INDIFFERENT, HONEST MAN"

"**N**OW, I've got you, Mr. Warneton. I submit that this is an argument for the equality of woman you won't laugh away!" cried Barbara triumphantly.

The distance between the two was scarcely ten yards, which made conversation easy, and even a poor shot could scarcely have missed at that short range, so he made no effort to escape.

"It is more," returned the man, easily; "it argues superiority on your part, rather than equality on mine."

"First of all, get off your horse without lowering your hands," went on Barbara, ignoring this attempted banter.

"That's easy," said the man, swinging his leg over the pommel of the saddle and dropping lightly to the ground.

"Now turn your back and start your horse down the trail."

The pony the man was riding seemed well trained, for it was only necessary for him to speak to the

horse to have him turn and walk down the hogback, which grew broader and broader as it ran southward. The horse presently stopped and waited.

“Now lay your revolver on that boulder,” she ordered him in great triumph.

For a resourceful man, ready with his weapons, the stranger was singularly submissive. He did exactly as he was told, although a desperado with a reputation like that of Warneton might have risked a shot, and whirling about with a revolver in his hand might have brought down his captor; but, with astonishing meekness, the stranger made no effort to take advantage of any such skill or quickness as he might possess.

“Good!” said the woman, and the note of relief in her voice, as the man obeyed, told him much. He did not seem in the least alarmed. He was smiling even more broadly than before. She could not see that, but she marked his shoulders shaking with suppressed merriment. “You won’t find it so amusing when I hand you over to the authorities at the station, or to Dempsey if he finds us, which is likely,” she said, indignant that he could regard the situation so lightly.

“I suppose not,” he threw back at her over his shoulder. “What am I to do now?”

“March down the trail after your horse, and stop by that big boulder yonder, and remember that I’ve

got the drop on you and that I'm a passably good shot with a revolver.”

“I shall not fail to recollect it,” said the stranger, taking a step in the direction indicated.

The next moment a wavering scream broke on his ear. He turned with a quickness which would have told the woman much if she had been in condition to notice anything. What he saw alarmed him greatly. The smile left his face instantly. She had got fairly on the hogback, the narrowest part of it. Her horse had stopped abruptly. He was struggling to retain his footing. Directly in front of him a large rattlesnake, which had come from a crevice in the rock, having been disturbed by the passage of the man, lay coiled and ready to strike. As the woman's scream died away the man could hear the hideous, ominous rattle in the perfectly still air. He leaped toward her with amazing speed.

The hand that had held Barbara's gun dropped suddenly. By a nervous constriction the trigger was pressed and the gun went off as it rolled into the gorge below.

That completed the ruin of the horse. Under more favorable conditions he might have regained his footing and backed off to more solid ground, which only the assistance of an unshaken rider could have made possible, although that would have been a miracle; but the startling report swerved him further to

the side. His feet on the right hand went over the edge. Again the girl screamed. The next instant the man was upon them. A ready man of resource and courage, he. He had snatched his revolver from the boulder as he came, and with the quickness of light itself shot the head off the snake, which now lay writhing helplessly in his path. The next second he was by Barbara's side.

"Loose your feet from the stirrups," he cried, as he approached her.

Half unconsciously she obeyed him, for as the horse slipped and fell he dragged her from the saddle, and he himself fell backward with her in his arms, fortunately upon the long way of the hogback. Holding her with one hand, he fought desperately with the other and with both feet until he stopped his own slipping. Then he slowly got to his knees and lifted her up. She was in a dead faint. He carried her rapidly across the ridge and laid her down, ran forward to his horse, detached the water-bottle from the saddle, and with it soon brought her back to consciousness.

"You're all right now, Miss," he began; "take a little swallow of this." He rested her against his knee, took out a pocket-flask, mingled some of the contents with water, and put it to her lips. "You're none the worse for your adventure."

"You have saved my life," said the girl, sitting up

after she had drained the cup. “That horrid snake! Where is it?”

“I was lucky enough to shoot its head off.”

“And my horse?”

“He went over the cliff.”

“Dead?” she asked.

The man nodded gravely.

“But for you I had gone over with him.”

“It was fortunate that I was here,” returned the other. “But my own horse is at your service, and you’ll be all right in a few moments.”

“Help me up, please,” said the girl.

When she got to her feet she turned and walked back toward the narrows. The man called his horse and accompanied her. Three hundred feet below lay a battered, bruised mass which had been her horse.

“I might have been there!” she cried, shudderingly. She turned to see her rescuer tendering her his gun with one hand and leading his horse with the other. “What’s the meaning of this?” she asked.

“I am still your prisoner,” was the smiling answer.

“Nonsense,” said the woman. “I did mean to drive you down to the station and give you up, but since you saved my life I can’t do it.”

“Why not? I’m just as bad as I was before.”

“You may be, but you have laid me under a debt which I cannot pay in that way. You can go free.”

She took the weapon, examined it a moment, and then handed it back to him.

“Would you give up the sole evidence of the superiority of woman?” he asked, still smiling but with a caustic touch in his question that irritated her.

“Physically, perhaps, you have the better of the argument.”

She forced herself to that answer. She controlled her temper with no little difficulty, but he had saved her life beyond doubt, and surely she could overlook his sarcasms.

“Only physically?” he asked again with that slight suggestion of a sneer.

“In no other way. For instance, I am compounding a felony in letting you go free. Are you capable of that for another man?”

“No; but for a woman, dear lady.”

She shook her head a little impatiently. This surely was no time for idle compliment. Nevertheless, his evasion brought some comfort to her. He could not meet her test. Spiritually he was not equal to her, she decided, much to her soul's comfort.

“You'd best go at once,” she urged. “Dempsey and his posse are apt to discover us at any minute. I could do nothing for you then.”

“And if I refuse?”

“You can't refuse. You'll be put in jail and — and hanged!”

“I’ll risk it for a few more minutes with you,” laughed the man.

“You’re mad. There’s another superiority we women have——”

“What’s that, pray?” he interrupted.

“Common sense. Now will you go?”

“No. Now I shall put you on my horse and we’ll go on together.”

There was a finality about his abrupt utterance. She permitted him to assist her into the saddle, whence she stared at him in surprise. If he were Warneton, and if he were captured she had set forth what would happen to him briefly and accurately. Could she be mistaken? Even the hour of their acquaintance had confirmed her in her hasty conclusion. Yet how account for his stubborn refusal to fly when he had the chance. He stood quietly waiting her pleasure, having apparently yielded the further direction of events to her. A doubt possessed her.

“Tell me,” she asked at last, restraining her horse to a slow walk so that the man easily kept pace with her, “am I, have I, been mistaken? Are you really Warneton?”

“Will you believe me if I say that I am not he?” asked the stranger lightly.

It was a direct question. Barbara looked at him. He stopped smiling and looked straight at her. And she returned his stare with interest.

Was her first opinion or her second the better? He looked like a man who would stop at nothing, but not exactly like a frontier desperado, gambler, murderer. There was something suggestive of the soldier in his erect bearing. Not the easy-going American soldier, but one who had trained in some more severely disciplined army.

“Frankly, I don’t know,” she said.

Disappointment clouded the man’s face.

“Look again,” he pleaded.

And Barbara looked again, finding it a little hard to sustain this highly challenging interchange of stares.

She had instantly jumped to the conclusion that the stranger was Warneton on the strength of a vague resemblance, and now she almost as suddenly jumped to another conclusion on the strength of a life saved. She boldly put out her hand with the rash assertion.

“I’ll believe whatever you tell me. Are you?”

He seized it, but instead of shaking it to her great surprise he kissed it. It was easy, since she was on horseback and he was afoot, her hand almost level with his face. Before she could protest he released her hand and spoke again.

“I am not the murderer you think me, and if I mistake not here comes the proof.”

She turned her head in the direction of his point-

ing finger, and out of the woods rode Dempsey and one of his men. Between them, bound, hatless, they had the real Warneton.

“Gosh!” exclaimed the greatly relieved Dempsey, drawing rein. “I’m glad I found you, Miss Babby. You give us the shake somehow, an’ then we caught this desperaydo an’ I had to take him to the station. I sent two of the men back to look for you, not knowin’ you might run into some more mysterious adventures like you did before.”

“I did,” answered Barbara, “and this gentleman——”

“My name is Longfield,” said the man, quickly.

“Has taken excellent care of me.”

“I’m obleeged to you, stranger,” said Dempsey.

“This young lady——” continued the stranger.

“My name is Barbara Le Moyne.”

“Miss Le Moyne mistook me for the murderer and had captured me herself.”

“Well, I am damned!” roared Dempsey, greatly amused; “what won’t you be up to next?”

“I owe you most humble and abject apologies, Mr. Longfield,” said Barbara. “Now that I see you together you don’t look in the least like that criminal yonder.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” said the real Warneton, lifting his head. “I don’t look at him with a woman’s eyes. He’s got a mean streak in

him, you'll find out. Take it from me. I know men."

A curious change swept over Longfield's face. He fairly leapt toward Warneton. Barbara recalled that he had admitted killing men. It must have been when he was in that savage mood, she thought. It was Dempsey who interposed in the nick of time.

"Easy, now, easy," he said; "from a man like that it's a kind of compliment, Mr. Longfield."

"Turn me loose with a gun," growled Warneton, who hadn't turned a hair, though he had never been nearer death in his life, "and I'll show you who's the best man."

"That'll be about enough from you," said Dempsey to his prisoner.

Longfield laughed. His face changed again. Barbara could hardly believe the transformation she had seen. He turned toward her, smiling.

"No apologies are due from you, Miss Le Moyne," he said, apparently obliterating Warneton and all his works from his mind.

"But I insist," she said, gravely. "I feel I owe you much more than apologies."

"Well, then, since you insist upon being in my debt, you can repay me, if you will."

Barbara's heart sank a little. She did not like the sound of those words, but the completion of the sentence reassured her.

“By honoring me with your acquaintance,” he went on, smoothly. “You must live somewhere. May I call?”

“My home is in San Francisco. I am going there tomorrow. My address——”

“Pardon,” said Longfield, whipping out his notebook, and then at her dictation he wrote it down.

“But I have your horse,” said the girl.

“If you will leave him at the stable near the station in the village, that will be sufficient.”

“But how will you get there?”

“It will be nothing to some marches I have made” —she was quick to note the military word—“and I would gladly give him to you in fee simple in payment for quite the most delightful morning I have spent since I came to—in my life,” he added, clicking his heels together, bowing to her, saluting the others, and turning away.

“Why do you happen to have his horse an’ where’s yourn, Miss Babby?” asked the sheriff.

Rapidly Barbara told him the story.

“Well, I’m damned!” said he again, simply, without any discourtesy and certainly with no irreverence at all. “What next, I wonder?”

Barbara wondered, too. She had saved one man’s life apparently, and now another man had saved her life. Would he vanish, too? She looked long after the figure of her companion of the morning striding

across the prairie until she lost sight of him in a dip in the undulating fields. Dempsey was loath to leave her, but as she justly observed she could easily get back to the camp and nothing else was liable to happen to her this morning! So he went away with his prisoner, and Barbara rode alone with her recollections—a man unconscious in her arms, she unconscious in a man's arms! Most delightful situations!

Barbara Le Moyne decided she had never spent such a wonderful vacation in her life. She was sorry, indeed, that it was over. Insatiably she wanted more—another man, another adventure. Yet three men would surely have unduly complicated matters. Two were plenty. Longfield! She wished she had learned that other man's name. Where could he have gone? Something told her she would see him again some time. Did wish father conclusion? Was the assurance the child of hope?

BOOK II

“Find the Woman”

CHAPTER VII

SETS FORTH WHAT HAPPENED AT A HARMLESS LITTLE
DINNER IN NEW YORK

THE dinner party was over. It had been a small, highly select affair. The chief guest ostensibly had been the distinguished United States senator. In his honor it had been given — so, at least, he had been led to believe. His presence had been vitally important. Not for anything that he said or did, for those had amounted to just nothing except the polite and witty conversation naturally to be expected on such an occasion where all of the guests were clever.

His importance lay in the fact that he was so well known and so openly and unmistakably loyal and patriotic that his presence with his wife, who was equally well known, threw an aegis of impeccable respectability over the whole affair; not that there was anything the least disreputable, in the common acceptance of the term, in the three men and their wives, who remained after the senator had taken his departure. Heaven forbid!

And if the famous senator had for a moment imagined that he was only a blind — a stool pigeon! — and that the unexpected summons which had taken

him and his wife away at nine o'clock had been carefully prearranged by his host and the other guests, the Senate Chamber itself in which he was accustomed to hold forth brilliantly on occasion while the world listened, sometimes with bated breath, would not have sufficed to contain his righteous indignation.

But in this instance the great senator had been as innocent as a babe unborn. He simply dined with his friend, the editor, and with his acquaintance, the well-known financier, whose loyalty like his own had never been questioned despite his foreign name, as the guests of the eminent Franco-Levantine visitor to the United States who was returning, in his apartment in the great New York hotel, in this very delightful way some of the hospitality he had received since he had been in America on a most secret and mysterious mission, it was whispered, and for the Allies, of course!

The dinner had been beyond praise in appointments, service, and quality. In these things it measured up to the high level of the guests.

So the senator went on his way rejoicing with his wife, regretful indeed that he could not stay longer with the three agreeable, congenial men who had repaired to the library of the apartment after the ladies had gone to the drawing room. But it was not to be. Apparently the three men were not troubled over the untimely departure of the chief guest, rather

relieved, indeed, despite the polite protestations they had made. Over the coffee, the liqueurs, and the cigars, an important discussion was taking place, in which the senator would have been decidedly *de trop*.

Conspiracies can be more safely carried on and plans laid with less fear of detection in the broad and open light of day than in the secret purlieus in which romancers, who never conspire except on paper, almost invariably place them. There was no place so convenient, so free from suspicion, for discussing such hidden things as disloyalty and treason as any great hotel, especially as the senator of high reputation had been present before the discussion and as the host was believed to represent in a quiet, unofficial way, one of the allied governments.

But that wonderful detective and protective institution, the United States Secret Service, having become even more proficient through practice than it had been before the war, was strictly on the job. One of the exceptionally efficient waiters at the dinner had been a representative of that great organization. It was he who served the three gentlemen in the library after the withdrawal of the senator which he had witnessed and marked. The senator's presence had puzzled him at first, but it had not taken him long to perceive the purpose for which he had been invited, and that once that purpose had been served his elimination was necessary.

The waiter himself had brought to the senator the false note which called him away. He was sure he recognized the man who delivered it, as an obscure agent of the propaganda, who had been under surveillance some time, but had not been arrested mainly because through his movements they hoped to discover the chiefs. When the senator read the letter he crumpled it up and threw it in the wastebasket, whence it had been carefully retrieved by the waiter unnoticed by the others. A reading of the note convinced him of the truth of his deductions.

At the risk of his life the waiter had hung himself outside the window of the room in which the consultation took place and which he himself had previously opened a little at the top and bottom—ostensibly to give air to the smokers, really to give ear to himself—and with his feet on the ledge and his hand on the sash, concealed from observation within by the drapery, he had listened. With characteristic caution the Franco-Levantine had personally inspected the room thoroughly, even including the fireplace and the book cases—there were no closets—and had satisfied himself that there was no one listening outside the door. He was too wise to shut the door, but left it open. He was accustomed to this sort of thing and he was sure that no one could enter the hall and approach the door without his becoming aware of it. Sometimes and for some things there

is more protection in an open door than in a closed one!

“Better take a look out the window, too,” said the financier.

The Levantine laughed and shook his head.

“This is a fire-proof building,” he said, as he glanced toward the window, “there are no fire escapes and we are twenty stories up. There are no aeroplanes about. We are as safe from observation here as we would be in the desert of Sahara. Be seated, gentlemen. I inspected all the adjoining rooms above and below before you came. There is no dictaphone even.”

He himself sat where he could see the door and a portion of the hall. He had his back to the light. The friends drew their chairs near to him. The Secret Service agent breathed a sigh of relief and set himself to listen. If he had been detected he could have chosen between a twenty-story fall to the court yard pavement and what they would have meted out to him. There would have been no middle consequence. He smiled at the remark about the dictaphone. He had refrained from installing one because he knew it would have been discovered.

“Well, what about—?” began the editor, but the upraised hand of the host checked him.

“We all know to what you refer. It is better to mention no names I should think.”

“What! After your search?”

“One may never be absolutely sure even after the closest personal inspection,” was the unexpected rejoinder; and indeed there was more truth than the Levantine realized in his sententious remark.

The editor laughed. The banker nodded. The editor was accustomed to talk—that was his stock in trade; the banker was not—secrecy was his *métier*. The latter, therefore, knew better than the former the value of ambiguity and reticence. The one spoke to conceal thought, the other kept silence for the same end. Was the difference only in degree?

“The situation is this way,” continued the foreigner. “We have traced it, followed it, in its route from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific. After that we have lost track of it definitely. Yet, something we have learned. The man who brought it was picked up by a trans-Pacific freighter outward bound, from a dismasted and totally wrecked schooner a few days’ sail from the Oregon or California Coast.”

“Was the stuff aboard?” asked the financier.

“It seems not.”

“Was anyone else on the schooner?”

“No one.”

“Well, then, the problem appears to me to be easy,” interposed the editor.

“Ah, indeed,” remarked the host, with a suspicion of a sneer. “What would you suggest?”

A Harmless Little Dinner

“Get hold of the man and make him tell,” was the prompt answer.

“That, of course, is the obvious thing, but in matters of this kind the obvious is dangerous, if not impossible.”

“Why, I should have thought with your organization in——”

“No localities please,” interrupted the foreigner raising his hand again.

The journalist shook his head impatiently. “I cannot see the necessity for beating about the bush this way. But have it as you will. It would be the best plan for our organization then, to get hold of the man and——”

“Easy, indeed, as you say,” again interrupted the chief conspirator, a trifle impatient at the idea that such a course would not have been pursued if it had been practical. “Only it happens that the man was unconscious when he was picked up, he was still unconscious when they put him ashore for hospital treatment at Hawaii.”

“Has he, by any mischance, died?” asked the financier.

“No, he recovered and so far as we can learn he is in full possession of his faculties and is back—you know where. But we are positive that he has made no effort to get the stuff and we have shrewdly suspected that he is either trying to shake off—us,

or maybe he has forgotten where he has concealed it himself."

"Impossible," exclaimed the financier, referring to the latter hypothesis.

"By no means," returned the better-informed journalist. "Such things happen all the time."

"He has been shadowed and studied," continued the host. "We have had him under the closest observation, but have learned nothing, as I have stated. We can't risk his seizure until we know. Besides, he is not the man to be forced into a confession. We must play a waiting game. The United States is exceedingly anxious for the—ah—stuff. The visible supply is about exhausted. They must have it. Our need is even greater than their's. We must have it. Odds are heavy enough against us as it is and it is not too much to say that its possession might be vital to our success."

"But what is—?" Again the warning hand. "Well, what is *he* doing?" continued the editor, a little more impressed by the extreme caution of his host.

"Everything that man can do," was the answer. "He is a most astute man. After some difficulty in locating him, he has made friends with him. He hopes to gain his confidence and at the right time our man will be on the job. He has to move with the utmost circumspection. We have

learned that the government has got wind of the affair and one of its best agents has been given exclusive charge of the quest. He is out there now."

By "there" the host did not mean the window ledge where the "best agent" listened, smiling at the genuine compliments, but a place much farther away to which he would go presently.

"This is a dead secret, but we have found it out," the host went on. "Our friend has a difficult task. He has to defend himself on one side and attack upon the other, as it were. He needs money and he needs letters."

"I will attend to the financial part," said the banker, promptly.

"Good. Make your check, say for one hundred thousand, out to me."

"Francs, marks, or——?"

"Dollars, if you please. He must not be hampered for lack of funds."

"As for the letters, I will see that he gets those," observed the editor.

"Then it is all settled?"

"Not quite," was the prompt return of the newspaper man. "After our friend gets it how is he going to dispose of it? How is it to be got across?"

"That has all been arranged," answered the host, smiling. "That is a mere detail, gentlemen. The thing is to locate the stuff. A fast motor boat to meet

a lumber schooner from, you know where, and then our representation — You understand? ”

“ Oh, I see. ”

“ When we get it down there we will get it across. Now, gentlemen, let us join the ladies. It is unnecessary to caution you to let no whisper of this get about. A firing squad, or a rope around your necks, to say nothing of my own — ”

Both men nodded. The host had no need to fill in the pause. Without further conversation they followed the Franco-Levantine into the drawing room.

It had not been especially difficult with the quality of nerve with which nature had dowered the Secret Service agent for him to lower himself down from the window of the room above to the sill of the window below. But it was a terrible task with twenty stories of space below him to climb up the rope to the room above which he had secured. He risked his life every second. As he changed his clothes he wondered if what he had heard had been of sufficient importance for the risk. When he came to consider it together with what was already known, he decided certainly that it had been.

That night the same wires carried long messages in codes, different codes of course, across the continent, which set things in motion. And the agent himself followed the wires.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEREIN THE TWO MEN ARE CONTRASTED AND KEENE'S
PREDICAMENT IS SET FORTH

BARBARA LE MOYNE was not alone in her realization of Longfield's peculiar attractiveness. He had a charm that was exercised despite some things about him which scrutiny and analysis revealed as not entirely pleasing. To a handsome face and a graceful person were added brilliant wit and an unexceptionable manner. Both had been in evidence in that first meeting in the North Woods. The details sound effeminate, but there was no lack of strength and power about the man. He was a sort of an up-to-date "Admirable Crichton," who bore himself so easily and was apparently so unconscious of his qualifications that this perfection did not irritate. Women liked him better than men did. Perhaps men would have been more strongly drawn to him if he had not so obviously preferred woman-kind—to play with at any rate. When there was work to be done it might be different, she thought. There was not a little mystery about him despite his frankness, which women sensed vaguely to the enhancement of his attractiveness. There is a specious

frankness that conceals while it seems to reveal. Longfield had that capacity unlimitedly, it appeared.

Longfield had come to San Francisco apparently with plenty of ready money backed by unexceptionable letters of introduction and had been received everywhere. With all doors open he had chosen to enter Barbara Le Moyne's more frequently than any other. Longfield was sometimes considered by those who knew him best to be too entirely regulated, too conventional, cast as it were in an unyielding mold of some kind of set formality—not that he was ever monotonously regular, rather studied and determined, not self-determined, either.

Barbara Le Moyne was different. And the opposite attracted her. Although her fine face was lacking in some of the attributes of classic beauty, it was none the less charming. She just escaped a physical perfection in which Longfield, who realized it all very well, would have revelled. She came near enough to it for his aesthetic mind as it was. Her mind was quite as good as his, but again different. She rejoiced in the odd, the unusual. Possessed of sufficient means to gratify her own inclinations she had the courage to do so. One of her friends, a crusty old bachelor, had carved on the chimney breast of his hunting lodge these words:

This is my house, here I do what I damn please!

The spirit of the rude phrase was her own. She

did much as she pleased with life. Happily a certain native American rectitude kept her from depths others might have sounded; and presently Society, which had at first marvelled at her and then frowned upon her and next fought against her, finally came to accept her, as she was. She became the fashion—but without imitators. She lived her life and Society was glad to share it on her own terms when she graciously permitted it to enjoy that privilege. She was a perfect representative of the imperfect, that is to say, the unconventional. Why she chose so to be she never explained. Mystery, in a woman, is at first attractive, although it may tend to become unbearable.

Longfield's experience with women had been great and varied. But amid their outward differences he believed he had discovered a rooted sameness. That Barbara Le Moyne was really different, inwardly and spiritually different, appealed to him—not so much the spiritual side, Longfield cared little about that. And despite himself he loved her.

He had loved her from the moment he came upon her in the North Woods, neither expecting the other. She was camping there for pleasure, seeking in the wildness escape from convention, which, however she disdained it, she could not continually flout at all times. He was seeking—well, certainly not a woman. The unexpected meeting added piquancy to

the situation. And Barbara's curious mistake with its amusing results had settled the question. For a man so calculating and unemotional to fall in love with her and to admit it was a rare tribute to her engaging personality. Longfield had a sentimental vein in him for all his hardness.

When he returned to San Francisco, which he did, the night of their meeting, he awaited her return, which had been delayed somewhat, with an eagerness he had never before experienced, though he had waited for many women in different parts of the world, and not a few had waited for him—unavailingly and in tears, for the most part. He had presented his letters, had called properly thereafter by her invitation and encouraged by her welcome, he had become an habitu   of her domicile. He would not have believed it possible that he could grow to care so much for anyone. In her society he sometimes forgot himself and his affairs. Nor could he be sure that she returned his passion. Perhaps that incertitude fed its flame.

As for her, she found herself wondering just how great was his appeal. Did she care as he? Could she care? Did she wish to? She hesitated and, contrary to the proverb, she was not lost because of her indecision. She deliberated and could come to no conclusion. She wavered between first impressions and later ones. In some things she was the most

practical of her sex. Whence came Longfield? From his conversation it seemed that he had been pretty much everywhere and therefore his experience gave her no clue. What was he doing in San Francisco? For the matter of that what had he been doing up in the North Woods when that unexpected and dramatic meeting took place? Why did he linger on, her frequent visitor?

A less clear-sighted person would have answered that she was the pole star of his attraction, but although she was too much a woman not to realize his growing passion she knew it was not that alone. At times Longfield thought it was only she, but he was aroused from that temporary self-deception by the arrival of Keene.

It was weeks after he had been landed by the *Cambodia* at Honolulu for hospital treatment that Christopher Keene set foot in San Francisco. He was completely recovered from his wounds, no scar was visible. The deep cut on the head was concealed by his hair. He had shaved his mustache and beard. Many of the signs of exposure and hardship which Barbara had noticed had disappeared. The long weeks in the hospital had even cleared his complexion. There were some things written in his face which would never be erased, but most of his youth had returned—outwardly, visibly, at any rate.

When Longfield and Keene stood side by side, as

presently they did, it would be difficult to secure a greater contrast. In no way was Keene handsome. He did not barely escape it like Barbara Le Moyne, he had no claim to it whatever. His features were harsh, he was even a little forbidding in his ruggedness. But he was strong, clear-eyed, firm-mouthed. He was good to look at, because one could see courage and determination and honesty in his personality. There was no apparent mystery about him.

No mystery? Well, none that appeared on the surface; he would have hated that—yet within? That was different. The man was a prey alike to an anxiety and a disappointment so great as to be almost unbearable. He was almost driven mad by them. Yet such was his control that no outward evidence of the inward struggle was visible. That was his way. Longfield possessed that genius for repression also, but with a difference. Longfield buried his secrets, whatever they were, as a blade is sheathed in velvet. Keene hid his under a granite rock. One saw instinctively that the velvet hid something, the granite rock only lay where it had been cast by nature and gave no sign of what it concealed or even that it hid anything.

As it happened the secrets of both men concerned the same thing. Though they knew it not they were engaged upon the same quest. And in the pursuit of it they were to come in contact with the same

woman—Barbara Le Moyne being entirely unconscious of that fact. Longfield had a great advantage in her acquaintanceship, for when she at last met Keene, she supposed she had never seen him before. Later she was vaguely conscious that he reminded her of something or somebody. The delayed reminder was so faint, however, that she presently forgot it.

Keene was seeking a woman—a woman he did not know—whose name he had never heard. He felt by no means sure that he would recognize her if he found her. That she had been at one time on the North Pacific coast of the United States, that she was young and efficient, that she had the whitest neck and arms, that she had helped him—these made up the totality of his recollection. He could not even recall whether she were dark or fair. Not much was there on which to build a hope. Few facts were these on which to base a search. Yet he must find her.

He did not love her. Oh, no. But through her and through her alone could he achieve a certain design to which he had given himself wholeheartedly. In the attempt to bring about that achievement he had suffered and struggled amazingly. He had performed the incredible. Through difficulties inexpressible, over unknown lands and across trackless seas, with but a single comrade of his race, he had reached his goal. Step after step the journey had been marked by lives, deaths rather, of men. The trail was blazed

by blood. He had lost his best friend on the way. And now, failing the discovery of the woman, or a miracle, he was halted on the very verge of final success. Miracles had not happened heretofore in Keene's hard adventurous career, nor did he expect them now, therefore to find the woman was his only recourse. Unwittingly she had his secret. Whether she concealed it in scabbard or under rock or babbled it like a brook, which he cynically thought might be the average woman's way, he must have it. Yet he had a feeling that she was not an average woman and in that he rested.

For Keene had forgotten where it was on the shore his Malays had attacked him! That blow on the head had done just that, nothing more. Up to the last shot at the sun before the fog in which he had made his landing, the drift through the fog, the river, the shore, the battle, he remembered everything; after that, nothing! There had been a mnemonic break in his life. A period had gone. The great erasure lay between the battle on the unknown shore in the mist and the awakening in the hospital at Hawaii. Everything else was clear to him. He could trace the whole terrible journey. Every desperate endeavor, every infinite hazard, every obstacle, natural and human, was etched upon his brain.

He knew how he and young Seymour had fled from Baku on Lake Caspian, at the foot of the Caucasus,

where he represented a great American corporation, when the Russian Revolution had broken out. He recalled the great idea that had come to him as he drove his motor boat northward across the wind-lashed waters of the great inland sea. He knew how later on with Seymour's devoted backing he had fought with the rude miners of the Urals, matching his cunning and wit and strength against theirs, to get what he wanted—what he would almost give his soul to get again.

He could vividly recall the incredible journey, the Germans and their creatures in the revolution, who had got wind of his design just too late, had forced them to take by closing the ordinary routes to him. It would have been comparatively easy to have gone north from the mines and to have taken the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok. But that way was barred by the German influence. He laughed as he thought how he had outwitted the Huns and their omnipresent agents. He had packed his precious cargo across the mountains, down the sea, over the desolate sun-blasted plain of Turkestan via the ancient Oxus River, and into China, over the fearful horrors of the almost untrodden, well-nigh impassable Baroghil Pass.

He remembered how he had toiled up the historic Indus with an ever-changing set of bearers, spurred to terrific feats of progress in the wild Himalayas by

the stern admonition and desperate energy of their two white masters. Man after man had died. The way he had come was marked by corpses rotting, or bleaching, or freezing, but he had kept on. And yet, by each body, rotting in the rain, or bleaching in the sun, or freezing amid the snow, lay a weight of precious cargo, to bring which no price had been too great to pay. What he had perforce left behind for lack of human transport had been invaluable, but what he managed to carry on was enough.

From the Indus he had crossed the mountains by trails never before trod of men—certainly not of white men—until he reached the head waters of the sacred Brahmaputra. From there on his progress had been easier. He recollected the hot feverish crawl along the unhealthy shores of the Bay of Bengal, the crossing of the Malay Peninsula, the careful avoidance everywhere of Europeans. The escape again and again from the network of spies and agents of Germany, who had been warned that he had been held back from the Trans-Siberian Railway and that he must eventually arrive somewhere on the Indian Ocean or the Asiatic littoral of the Pacific, and who had picked up his trail finally, only to lose it and him when he embarked for that long voyage across the Pacific, from the perils of which even a spirit as hardy as that of Drake or Magellan might have shrunk. He had in default of anything else decked

over and partly rebuilt an old schooner, which he bought for the cruise—a result to make a real sailor laugh, yet it had served. He was a jack of all trades, this civil engineer. He had to be. And he had spent a small fortune on the way. Blood and iron? No. Blood and soul and money. With these, men can go anywhere, even to that kingdom of heaven, which mayhap the violent may take by force if only it be suffered!

His design was to conceal his treasure on the shore somewhere temporarily, to take his Malay crew down to San Francisco, ship them back to Singapore, and then choose his own time and his own way to dispose of it. On that voyage the greatest of calamities had befallen him. Young Seymour, so brave, so gallant, so faithful, weakened by strains and hardships that had almost broken down the rugged Keene himself, had been, as he believed, assassinated by the blood-thirsty Asiatics from the Peninsula. He remembered how they had buried him at sea in the fog into which they had run, when but a few days' sail from the Pacific Coast. He had said what prayers he could remember and improvise as he launched the body of his faithful friend and fellow-workman in the great adventure in the dull gray sea, while the Malays stood about watchful and silent, recognizing his suspicions, of which he had no proof. They knew he could not do without them and he felt they were

only biding their time and awaiting their opportunity.

The fog had prevented his getting an observation before he made that landfall. He did not know upon what part of the shore his keel had grated. And then came that mutiny, that battle on the river bank. Po-Yan-Pen and Wan-Aman, taking advantage of his natural feeling of elation at the end of the achievement and the consequent failure of that eternal vigilance, which is not only the price of life in high adventure, but of success, and which he had redoubled since Seymour's murder, had stricken him down. Seymour had not been there to divide the watch and it had been easy at last to take him unawares.

He remembered everything up to that moment in which the cupidity of the semi-savages, who only reasoned that what had been hidden with such care must be valuable, had struck with sudden determination to secure it at whatever cost. After that he could recall only a ministering woman. But the place of it all had gone from him—utterly. Rack his brains as he might, nothing but her presence came to him. A face seen dimly, unrecognizable, a white neck, two white arms, a kissed palm—God! It was maddening. She must be found. She must tell him. She must show him the way.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH BARBARA LE MOYNE RECEIVES A DIAMOND FROM
A STRANGER TO GO WITH A KRIS

NOW, time hung heavily for Keene, despite his intense mental efforts. He had once enjoyed a wide acquaintance in San Francisco, but most of the men of his years were in the service. Social activities were largely suspended, besides he knew no women. He had never been much of a ladies' man and that handicapped him in his search for the woman. True, he had acquaintances among the older men at the club, a few even in San Francisco, but there was not much congeniality between them.

The love of adventure still dominated him despite the fact that he was no longer in his first youth with its consequent enthusiasms. And an even greater desire had taken hold of him. America was in the Great War to the full now and he craved to get in with the rest. Indeed, he already had made application for a commission in the engineers, which he was certain would soon be favorably acted upon; too soon, indeed, he feared, because he must settle the business in hand before he entered the service. Indeed, the business in hand meant much more to the

success of American arms than any personal contribution which he could make as an individual. He doubted whether he had done right in making the application while that affair was still unsettled. A man of the most direct downright character, of the say-and-seal type, the incertitude was abhorrent.

The woman! He must find her. Where could she be? The Northwest Coast was many miles from San Francisco. Why did he linger there? She might live in Portland, or Seattle, or in any one of the thousand small cities or towns or villages between. Or she might be from the farther East. He did not think that. He sensed vaguely a breath of western freedom and self-reliance in her. He thought sometimes whimsically, that hers must have been a terribly dominant personality to have driven everything else out of his head. What frightful mischance had deprived him of other memory.

He had heard that lapses mnemonic caused by shock had been restored by a similar shock and sometimes he considered fantastically whether or not it would be better to run his head into a brick wall or drop out of a window in the hope that thereby he might recover what he had lost. He had reached a mental depth in which he fancied he would cheerfully have killed himself if only he might have a moment of time before death to remember and impart his knowledge. The *impasse* was maddening. The

terrible endeavor so gallantly achieved, the well-nigh desperate adventure so determinedly surmounted, the frightful perils, so heroically overcome; were they to end in this sorry oblivion? He grew more and more immersed in a terrific effort to remember.

To grapple with the intangible is the hardest of all tasks. Like many men of scientific efficiency, of calculated action, he was a creature of impulse on occasion. Like many doers he was something of a dreamer as well, and constructive imagination, like a vein of pure gold in its matrix, ran through the hard quartz of his make-up. He was more swayed by these emotions than he would have admitted or indeed believed possible.

Therefore, he stayed in San Francisco because, without rhyme or reason, he had come to the conclusion that she must be there. And he daily walked the streets until he was exhausted, staring into a numberless succession of faces feminine at the risk sometimes of a charge of impertinence or insolence. And his quest was always in vain. How could it be otherwise? He realized that even if he came face to face with her he would probably not recognize her by looking at her. Something else would have to identify her to him, or the reverse. He had a feeling that something else would not be lacking. So he persisted in his search.

And another strange emotion began to develop in

his soul. He hardly admitted it to himself. There was no necessity of doing so. He was ashamed even of the vague recognition of the fact in which he permitted himself to indulge. Yet, undoubtedly, he was falling in love with this woman of whom he had so dim a remembrance that confronted by her he would not recognize her face! It was absurd, beyond belief. It was contrary to every normal instinct and habit of his being. Yet, it was true. He had not thought very deeply about those things, but if he had he might have realized that in the greater love there is just that element of strangeness to make it great. It is the unusual, the extraordinary, the unreasoning that provide the elements out of which grand passions spring to life.

These greater loves never arise from close, long-continued association. Propinquity may develop affection, no more, unless some rude break provide a tragic interlude and introduce the element of surprise. Flint and steel strike sparks at once, pieces of wood must be placed in juxtaposition for a long period and even then friction must be applied before the slow fire comes.

Keene was not much of a philosopher. He did not reason it all out in this way, but he awoke to the realization that he was in love with a faint recollection, a vague shadow, an idea, or ideal feminine of which his exact knowledge was so slight that he could

A Diamond from a Stranger

scarcely fabricate a vision of it. He was something of a fatalist. His success so far in his endeavor made him feel that ultimate victory was to crown it. He would find the woman. She would tell him what he wanted to know. He would love her. She would love him in return. But when? where? how? He could not wait. He wanted her instantly, on the moment. And so he walked and looked and prayed and dreamed and hoped—the man of action under a spell checked, almost checkmated!

Pursuant to his policy of going where women would be likely to congregate, he found himself one night in a great public hall, filled with life and light and color and music, with clever speeches and suggestive motion pictures and appealing feminine beauty persuading all who had come, to buy Liberty Bonds in one of the first of the great loans negotiated by the United States. He was, of course, a complete and entire stranger to the social circle, which had engineered the demonstration and whose members were actively engaged in profiting by the great number of people who had been attracted by the music, the speaking and the high station of the women, young and old, mostly the former, who had the subscription campaign in local charge.

That campaign had been in full swing for a week. Every conceivable device to persuade and beguile torpid humanity into purchasing bonds had been em-

ployed. These methods were superfluous so far as he was concerned. Naturally, Keene had at once bought, and all that he could afford. He had subscribed promptly without solicitation, so soon as the opportunity was presented for as great an amount as he could possibly compass. Keene had been moderately well-to-do before his great adventure, but he had spent most of his fortune in that brave dash across the world. He had subscribed as men should subscribe, by carefully counting the cost. He had reserved for himself enough for his living until such time as he had been commissioned, and an additional sum which he calculated narrowly would just suffice to complete his enterprise. Of course, there was some uncertainty in that reservation, but he had reduced his working capital to the very lowest limit.

Now Keene viewed the apparently necessary process by which the unwilling were persuaded, the indifferent aroused, the narrow broadened, the ignorant enlightened, and the selfish made generous, with a certain degree of cynicism. It seemed to his sturdy patriotism that the opportunity and the need were sufficiently persuasive and that no other stimulus should be needed. He thought that the band-playing, the parading and hurrahing were derogative to the dignity of the United States and the people thereof. He was a little ashamed that it should be necessary, it mortified him and hurt his pride. He was not,

therefore, in a very receptive mood in the great hall into which he had come on his usual quest.

In accordance with his desires he made his progress through the hall a leisurely one, stopping at every booth, carefully scrutinizing each fair saleswoman. He turned a deaf ear to the speaking and the music and never glanced at the pictures. But he searched the faces of the women. These ladies marked his approach with lively interest. He was good to look at without being in the least a handsome man—despite himself he hated those things. In his bearing there was suggested both success and command, and a mastery of material things that seemed to indicate wealth. And so they literally swooped down upon him and exhausted all their faculties in the effort to sell, but in vain. Keene's disgust with their methods was so genuine that he did not even declare that he had already subscribed. He shook his head and when that did not avail to release a fair detaining hand, he shook it off or took it off, gently enough, and moved on, leaving them discouraged and disheartened at the rebuff so unusual.

He completed the circuit of the hall, sat down at a table, ordered an ice, for the crowded room was terribly warm, and resisting the efforts on the part of the fair waitress, charmingly attired for the occasion, to sell him a bond, he looked down gloomily and disappointedly at the picture, beautiful enough, indeed,

to satisfy any man's eye which was not an eye single for something else. To him came Barbara Le Moyne.

"May I sell you a bond?" she said, stopping at his table.

He looked directly at her with his somewhat fierce, straightforward stare, and challenged by his glance she returned his look in exactly the same way. When they had last met, she had held his bleeding head on her bare arm and he had looked up at her and thought she was an angel. Now he looked at her without any recognition at all and she looked at him in the same blank way. His interest in her was only an interest that every man is bound to feel when approached by a beautiful woman, and her interest in him was the interest of that summons to combat in his glance which she could see if not understand; a problem plus whatever appeal there might be in his personality and that appeal was by no means little.

But the sad fact is that neither knew nor recognized the other, for not the faintest heart-throb, not the slightest quiver came to either. If Keene had realized who she was his first feeling would have been of disappointment at the failure of fate to supply the hoped-for suggestion. Indeed, he felt it later and Barbara was like-minded in after time.

How she got there was a little story. When Keene

passed the last booth, she had been seated at a desk in its rear adding up subscriptions.

"Girls," she said, while they were still staring at him, "our sales are over a million and three-quarters. We shall get the banner sure if we can only keep it up."

"Well, if we meet many more like that," returned one of her young companions, indicating Keene's big self moving through the crowd, "we will sell no more."

"I never saw such a man," said one of the young women from the adjoining booth, coming by and overhearing.

"Every booth in the hall has tried to sell him a bond without success, suppose you make the endeavor, Bab," said another. "You are our best salesman."

"That is a challenge I must meet," answered Barbara, lightly.

And the next moment she was on the trail of the engineer, and a few moments afterward she was at his table.

"You may not," was his direct and annoying answer to her question.

"I may sit down and talk to you, I presume," she replied, instantly, not so much abashed as she might have been, since she had been prepared for the abrupt refusal.

"I believe I have no exclusive right to the table," answered the engineer, with reserve.

Now, Keene was no boor, but his heart was stirred within him at what he considered "Vanity Fair" methods of getting people to do a duty with so powerful an appeal in itself. And he spoke more abruptly than he realized.

"Well," answered Barbara, her eyes flashing as she controlled herself with some difficulty, in the face of this brusque answer, to say the least. She did not intend to be easily rebuffed. It was not so much to serve the loan now that she fought. Her pride was engaged. "You may not have the right to control the table, but you act as though you had."

"I beg your pardon," contritely said Keene, rising, "if you wish this particular table I will leave it to you, of course."

Barbara, true to her unconventional standards, on that occasion did an unexpected thing. She promptly laid her hand upon his arm. She even clutched it. Indeed, it was necessary, if she were not to lose him.

"It is not the table that I want, it is you," she said, promptly and truthfully.

"Indeed, and what can you want of me?"

"Your subscription to the loan."

He shook his head and drew himself away. But Barbara was not to be denied.

“I am tired,” she said, drooping suddenly to emphasize her words. “I should like to sit down. I cannot do it while you stand. I cannot let you go. I have to follow you. Won’t you have pity upon me?”

Keene smiled. It was so obvious.

“Why cannot you let me go?” he asked, more gently in spite of himself.

“My honor won’t permit. I said I would sell you a bond or die in the attempt. Will you have my death on your hands?”

Now there was something very winning about Barbara. It was hard for her to jest lightly with this grim, dour, sphynxlike person, but she did it by the exercise of all her powers. The whole scene was intensely annoying to Keene and yet there was something pleasant about it. For one thing the conversation seemed so very private. The table was off to one side in a corner, for that reason Keene had chosen it. They were practically alone in the crowd. Like Signor Benedick, nobody marked them as they talked. The girl was obviously very much in earnest and she certainly had managed suddenly to look terribly tired. She was more beautiful than he had thought, and more fascinating! In finesse Keene was no match for her. He capitulated, ordered the refreshment she indicated at his request, sat down himself and watched her while she forced herself to

eat what she did not want the least in the world. While she ate and talked about nothing, Keene decided that the easiest and the quickest way out of the situation was to violate his principles and make another small subscription.

“Give me one of your blanks,” he said at last.

She handed him one from the bundle she had laid on the table. He filled it out, signed it, handed it back to her. She glanced over it and astonished him by deliberately tearing it into bits and throwing them contemptuously on the floor. She rose to her feet, her face flushed, disdainful, angry. But this time it was Keene who detained her.

“Wait a moment. What is the matter? I thought you did not refuse any subscription, however small.”

She waited the more willingly because all her movements were carefully calculated. She had decided how far she could go with Keene. She appraised him much more shrewdly and accurately than he had appraised her. Her object was to get him, his was only to get rid of her; and as hers was the greater aim she had him at a disadvantage.

“We do not disdain any subscription, however small,” she answered, turning. “But we do take into account, and rightly, the quality of the subscribers.”

“And where do you place me, may I ask, since you assume to judge?” interposed Keene, quickly.

“ You don’t look like a fifty-dollar subscription, your dress, your bearing, that ring you wear.”

Keene looked down at his hand. On his little finger he wore a large diamond of quality and price in a curious oriental setting. Now Keene did not usually wear jewels, especially diamonds of that size, but like many other adventurers he had sometimes bought diamonds as an investment to be realized upon in case of emergency. Men who knock about the world have opportunities for profitable bargains and that diamond was one of his assets. He intended to dispose of it when the time came and with the proceeds complete his undertaking. He had worn it across the world, because that was the best way to keep it, and he continued wearing it from habit. His face flushed at her utterly unwarranted personal allusion. Keene, as a rule, cared little for the opinions of anyone. So long as he kept his own self-respect, what people thought of him mattered nothing. Yet, this girl affected him strangely, in a way unexplainable to himself.

“ How do you know that I am not already the possessor of all the bonds I can buy? ” he asked, in a way that carried instant conviction that she had made a mistake.

“ You did not say, you wear no button,” faltered Barbara, suddenly aware that control of the situation had passed from her.

“ I don’t say so now, either,” said Keene.

“ I hate to think you a slacker,” returned the girl, insistently sticking to her point, forcing herself to do so, despite a sinking heart.

“ Slacker!” exclaimed Keene, bitterly. “ After a man has almost sold his soul, certainly given his heart’s blood for his country, to have the first American girl with whom he has spoken a word in four years, insinuate that he is a slacker. By Heaven!” he went on with quite unnecessary and unaccountable heat, except that this girl did move him, “ it would almost make me one.”

“ I am sorry,” faltered Barbara, amazed and dismayed at the sudden turn in the conversation.

“ Of course, womanlike, sorry, after you have done the mischief.”

“ I beg your pardon,” said Barbara, rising, “ only my zeal for the loan could be my excuse.”

“ My zeal is no less than yours,” returned Keene, rising. “ Just a moment.” He stripped the diamond from his finger. “ It cost me three thousand dollars in Calcutta. I bought it from a human derelict. How he came by it I don’t know, probably he stole it. I am no great judge of diamonds, but at the present prices I am sure it is worth more than five thousand dollars. Take it, sell it, buy Liberty Bonds with it.”

He thrust the jewel into her hand and turned away.

“ What shall I do with them? To whom shall I

send them?" she asked, in almost breathless excitement at this sudden turn.

"Where they will do the most good. Give them to the Red Cross. You look like an honest woman."

She took the words as compliment, not insult, and thanked him with a nod.

"But tell me your name, at least, that I may know to whom——"

Keene smiled, not pleasantly, but bitterly.

"I will tell you what my name is not," he interposed.

"And what is that?"

"Slacker!"

He turned away, leaving her fairly stunned with surprise, indignation, gratitude, admiration, a variety of emotions indeed. She was always having adventures, it seemed, with nameless people, who disappeared, leaving little tangible evidence behind them. A kris before, now a diamond in an oriental setting, which sparkled and flashed in her palm.

As for Keene he never looked back. He was conscious that he had acted like an impulsive fool. He had impaired his work for a girl he had never seen before, and would never see again. He had acted hastily, recklessly. Why? Was that woman, who had helped him on the headland, anything like this girl, he wondered? He found himself hoping so.

CHAPTER X

WHEREIN LONGFIELD ACQUIRES ONE PRECIOUS THING AND
SEEKS ANOTHER

TO BARBARA, sitting at the table, came all the girls from her booth who could leave it. She and Keene had not been so entirely free from observation as Keene had supposed. In fact, from a distance, so far as the moving throng had permitted, her companions had watched her.

“Well, did you get him?” asked one.

Barbara nodded. She opened her hand and glanced down at the ring. She held it up before the others. They were good judges of the quality, if not of the value of jewels. They gasped in astonishment.

“A ring!” exclaimed another. “What does it mean?”

“You asked me if I got him,” replied Barbara, gravely—she felt that way, despite the humor in the situation—“and I show you his ring.”

“Are you engaged to him, Babs?” asked a third.

“Quickest work I ever heard of,” exclaimed another, half in jest, half in earnest.

“Nonsense,” returned Barbara. “He did not do

me that honor and it's needless to say that I would not have accepted him if he had."

"But the ring?"

"I don't understand."

"Explain."

"The ring is his subscription. Girls, it was awfully romantic and terribly embarrassing. I had him under my thumb for a while, but before we got through I was there, under his, I mean."

"Babs, you? Impossible!"

"It's a fact, I assure you."

The girl smiled somewhat ruefully at the recollection.

"Tell us about it, quick. We are dying of curiosity."

"Well, it's this way. He's evidently some awfully highbrow person, I take it, full of great ideas of duty and he has probably subscribed some vast sum for some vast amount of the loan, all that he could possibly afford, and when I came along, without explaining anything, he offered me a fifty-dollar subscription, just to get rid of me."

"The mean thing!"

"Wait," continued Barbara. "I tore it up before his face. There it is," she pointed down at some scraps on the floor.

"Babs," exclaimed one, "you didn't?"

"I did. Look."

Whereat they craned their slender young necks to see and Barbara gave them time to take in the damning fact.

"Then I called him a slacker," she went on, with a note of self-accusation.

"You didn't!"

"Yes, I did. Then he rose up in wrath and said he had given his soul, his heart's blood, all that he had, for the loan, for the country, I mean, and it was a shock to him that the very first American girl he had spoken to in four years should call him a slacker. Girls, I felt terribly. I apologized and started away, but he would not let me go. I had noticed his ring. In fact, I had spoken of it. I was awfully personal. I wish I had not done it, for he stripped it from his finger and forced it upon me, told me to buy bonds with it, and when I asked him his name he refused to tell it, told me to give the bonds to the Red Cross and went away grandly—and that's all."

"He must have been awfully poor," observed one girl.

"Or awfully rich," said another.

"After all, you got his subscription," remarked the third. "How much is it worth—the ring, I mean?"

"I don't know, of course."

She lifted the jewel, slipped it on her middle finger, for which it was quite too large.

“It’s a beauty,” exclaimed the nearest girl. “I wish I had it. Why don’t you buy it yourself, Barbara?”

Barbara shook her head.

“I can’t afford to indulge in such expensive jewelry in these times. I’ll do just what he said with it. Find out its value, sell it, buy bonds, and give them to the Red Cross. It’s a sort of trust, you see.”

“Here comes Mr. Longfield,” said a girl. “He knows everything. He will tell you its value. Meanwhile, we must get back to our places or the other girls will beat us. Let us know the end of the romance, Barbara.”

Barbara nodded acquiescently, not foreseeing in the least degree what would be the end of the romance, not having any conception for a moment that it had begun long before on the high plateau overlooking the river and the sea, where she had taken this man’s bloodstained head in her arms. Her heart would have beaten quicker even than it was beating, if she had realized that. Was it the handsome Longfield whose approach had stirred her pulses? She received him gladly with an unwonted graciousness that warmed his heart. She was in that state of indecision in which she craved wise counsel and sympathetic company and Longfield was in a position to give her both. The spontaneous gladness of her wel-

come was because of that, rather than what he fancied, and hoped.

"I heard my name mentioned as I came up," he said, bowing over her hand. "May I sit down? May I order something for you?"

She nodded her head in answer to the first question, and shook it in reply to the second.

"Sit, by all means, I am so glad you came." She put more into the words than she realized, and he took more from them than was warranted. "But I have had all I want to eat and enough of other things, too."

She really did look tired, observed Longfield, keenly appraising her with his searching glance, and this time she was not putting it on for any purpose to be served. She had worked very hard that day and evening. One could not effortlessly bear away the palm for selling from such a competent group without labor, and the last scene had disturbed her more than she would admit.

"Yet, you had a welcome for me," said Longfield, swiftly and softly. "You wanted me."

It was a bold thing to say, but she did not resent it. Perhaps she was too tired. At any rate he gave her no time.

"What can I do to serve you?" he went on, in his graceful and insinuating, not to say caressing way, so different from the hard, downright bluntness of

the man who had occupied the same chair ten minutes before, she thought.

“Look at this,” she answered, handing him the ring. “What do you make of it, Mr. Longfield?”

He examined it critically, looking at it closely, holding it up so that the light played upon its facets. Barbara watched him anxiously. There was a deliberation about the inspection which bespoke knowledge and ability to judge of quality and value.

“I happen to be something of a connoisseur of diamonds, I may say,” he began.

“As you came up, the girls said you knew everything.”

“They do me too much honor,” smiled her companion, and again there arose that little doubt as to the quality of that smile that had come to her first, where they met in the woods that day and since. “But, as I said, I think I do know gems. The search for the beautiful and the precious”—he was looking directly at her now to the neglect of the diamond, which sparkled in his hand—“has always allured me, Miss Le Moyne.”

Before she could protest at the outspoken allusion his glance had returned to the diamond. That was his illusive habit. He had spoken of the diamond, but he had looked at her. Had she chosen to resent it he would have referred it all to the gem rather than

to the woman. It was a compliment direct and straightforward, which left her helpless. As it happened she did not wish to resent it.

“And what is your verdict on this—that?” she added hastily, looking toward the diamond, lest by any chance she should seem to invite further praise for herself.

He shrewdly suspected that he had gone far enough for that time, so he answered without hesitation or overt meaning.

“It is a diamond of the first water, beyond doubt. From its setting and from certain peculiarities in its cutting, I am sure it came from India.”

She nodded smilingly, pleased at his acumen.

“And its value, you think?”

“Guessing at its weight from its size, at the present high price per carat, I should say it was worth at least five thousand dollars; maybe a little more or a little less, but that is not far from it, I am sure,” he returned, after a long and critical appraisal of the stone.

“The man who gave it to me,” remarked Barbara, “said he had got it in Calcutta.”

“The man who gave it to you, Miss Le Moyne!”

“Yes; he, too, said he thought it was worth about five thousand dollars.”

“I don’t understand,” said Longfield. It was an admission he rarely made even to himself. “Since

you have done me the honor to consult me, will you please explain? ”

Rapidly Barbara retold the story. When she concluded Longfield did the handsome thing. He drew out a cheque book and his fountain pen, he filled out a cheque, detached it and tendered it to the girl.

“ To be on the safe side,” he said, “ I have made it out for six thousand dollars. That will abundantly cover the highest possible estimate of its value and if I have overpaid, I shall be only too glad to have the additional subscription, to that I have already made, go to the Red Cross.”

“ And considering the bonds you have already bought through me, Mr. Longfield, it is most generous of you,” said Barbara, appreciatively, taking the cheque.

“ You accept, then? ”

“ With the greatest pleasure.”

Longfield slipped the ring on his third finger.

“ I sometimes act as a collector of jewels for an acquaintance. I know he would appreciate the privilege of getting a jewel like this, although perhaps, after all, I shall reserve it for—” he paused expectantly.

Barbara was too much of a woman not to fall into his trap even with her eyes open.

“ For whom, if I may ask? ”

“ For the woman of my choice. For the woman

who captures a heart which has proved hitherto untakable, though often besieged."

His laughter carried away the amazing assurance of that remark.

"Mr. Longfield," said Barbara, suddenly, voicing a suspicion for which she had no real grounds, "what are you doing here? Where do you come from? Why do you buy the bonds of a country which does not seem to be your own, or is it?"

"You make a very direct appeal with your questions, Miss Le Moyne," answered Longfield, gravely, neither admitting nor denying Barbara's suspicion that he was not an American, although he wondered how she had divined that. "But what I have said to you since we met, or perhaps better what I have left unsaid, but which you have not failed to understand, I am sure—your questions prove that—possibly gives you the right to the inquiry. Whatever I may be I love the United States. I am eager for it. I am here to serve a great country. As to my work, it is not yet permitted me to disclose its details, or its purpose, not even to you from whom I would withhold nothing, not even myself, if you would honor me."

"You were not born here, then?" continued the deeply interested girl. "Are you a citizen?"

"Miss Le Moyne, I am familiar with the history of your great country. Its institutions and its possibilities have been my study for years—that's why

I am here. There was a foreigner once, a great sailor, of whom you must have heard, one John Paul Jones, who described himself as a citizen of the world; I am of the same citizenship! Incidentally, he gained immortal glory in warring against England"—was there a flash in Longfield's blue eyes at that word?—but no, as Barbara nodded her recollection of the story he went on as smoothly and equably as ever. "As for my birth, I was born again a short time ago, in the North Woods, when I met you on the rough trail. I date from that hour, the year of my lady."

Longfield, in his heart, cursed the interruption that stopped him there. As for Barbara, she went off with the friends who had come to take her home, undecided whether to bless or blame them for the sudden ending of that fascinating conversation. She thought it all over later in her bedchamber, for she found it difficult to go to sleep. Longfield had told her nothing really. The other man had been equally uncommunicative. There had been that ring. How generous of the unknown to give it. How generous of Longfield to buy it. She wished she had not sold it, she thought, as she drifted off to sleep at last.

CHAPTER XI

SHOWS HOW KEENE AND LONGFIELD BECAME ACQUAINTED
VIA THE ORIENT

ALTHOUGH Keene had not lived in San Francisco for years he had kept up his membership in the Scholastic Club, and naturally he made his home there until he could find the woman and could then decide upon his next move. He had considered and discarded many plans, during which he rapidly regained his former health and strength. Finally, in despair over the failure of his quest he determined either to charter a launch and go up the coast examining every inlet or river-mouth in the hope that one of them would quicken his recollection, or to go inland and search for the woman's camp to take his departure from it. Certainly women such as she would be rare and perhaps she would not be so difficult of discovery up there. Perhaps he had been mistaken in his feeling that she was no daughter of the wilds but the educated, refined product of the city. Yet he still sought her in San Francisco while he was negotiating for his launch and equipment—things very difficult to procure at that stage of the war. And he was greatly hampered by his quixotic be-

stowal of the ring. Yet somehow he did not regret it. He did not run across Barbara again and he encountered no one who in the least degree suggested the other woman. He found himself looking for Barbara, too. It seemed absurd to be searching for two women. And in vain. He wished he had got Barbara's name. She interested him! He would like to show her that he was no slacker.

Naturally he was in a great hurry. Time was vital. He could not wait. His country's need and his own desire for active service, which few could render better than he, made every hour of the utmost importance.

Longfield was in a hurry also. He had been on the point of leaving San Francisco, despite the rather halting progress of his love affair, because of the pressing nature of his business. He did not wish to go. He had an energetic and capable man's reluctance to leave loose ends behind him. He liked to finish every task. He had not completed that for which he had come. Nor incidentally had he yet won Barbara Le Moyne's heart, neither could that endeavor be considered in any way finished. But his superiors were imperative. He was needed elsewhere, they said.

After all, he thought a little absence might be useful in enabling him to decide upon the depth and permanence of his feelings. His was a hazardous

profession for all its quiet seeming, but if he found that he still loved her after he parted from her he would manage somehow to come back. And absence might help him with her also. At least he believed it would. His trunks were packed, he was ready to make his farewells to her and go when the incident of the ring occurred. Then he met Keene at the club. He put two and two together and decided to stay on. He felt after all that he would win out. He sent and received wires, cables, remittances as the outcome of a certain little dinner in New York. He changed his plans accordingly and remained in San Francisco.

He had been properly introduced at the Scholastic and had made many friends. As it happened until he bought the ring he had never chanced to meet or even see Keene, who kept to himself mainly. After the answers to his wires, which he carefully burned after he had read them, he went out of his way to seek the man. The ring gave him a clue. It had come across the seas, from India. Could it have been brought by him? The cable confirmed his bold and lucky guess.

It was not difficult to strike up an acquaintance. One morning at breakfast Keene missed the check that should have come with his order and summoned one of the passing old men who had replaced younger servants, called to the front.

“Boy, bring me the chit.”

Longfield was sitting near reading and covertly watching. The slightly unfamiliar words gave him an opening. He rose and approached the engineer.

“Pardon me,” he said, “but that form of address sounds good to me and I take the liberty of introducing myself. My name is Longfield——”

Keene glanced at him quickly; he was at once attracted by the apparently engaging frankness of the man, and seeing no reason for withholding the information answered,

“My name is Keene, Christopher Keene.”

“And you’ve lived in the East?”

“So many years that I’m almost a stranger at home.”

“My case exactly. Though I have met so many charming people since I came that it is hardly fair to say I am a stranger. I’ve lived East, too——” and by East both men knew that New York was not meant but those great Oriental lands of mystery and charm across the Pacific. “It does me good to meet someone who knows what’s out there. Did you come across recently?”

“On the last T. K. K. boat,” was the answer, which was quite true, though of course she had only picked Keene up at Honolulu. “And you, Mr. Longfield? How long since——”

“I think it was about six months ago that I left

the Over-Seas Club at Hong Kong," answered Longfield promptly.

"I know that club well," said Keene in turn, and presently reminiscencing over common acquaintances and common experiences the two men spent half a morning together. They were ill-sorted physically, yet perhaps because of their very difference they got along amazingly together — as well as two men, each resolved upon maintaining an impenetrable reserve upon certain matters, could get along. It is significant that most of the advances came from Longfield, who used every effort and every art to ingratiate himself with the other.

Miss Le Moyne found Longfield unusually agreeable about this time. There was an air of excitement about him, a foreshadowing of some coming triumph, which increased her interest in him. She began to consider him seriously. Yet really save in so far as making the acquaintance of Keene was involved he had made little progress with him. For Keene made no attempt to get at Longfield's secret, did not apparently know or, if he knew, care whether Longfield had a secret or not. And Keene, while he talked freely of certain earlier phases of his own life and adventures and exchanged all sorts of reminiscences with his new and agreeable friend, easily avoided committing himself as to the more recent episodes of his career and his present pressing affairs.

For one thing certain little happenings had given Keene pause in the acquaintanceship which had been verging on intimacy. One morning one of the club attendants had committed some venial fault of service. Longfield's eyes had suddenly flashed with passion, he had half risen from his chair in ill-restrained fury, when he caught Keene's surprised glance. His face had smoothed at once and he had passed off the man's dereliction with some pleasant pardoning word. And then the conversation had flowed on. But Keene had seen and he could not forget. Men who lived, as he, in momentary peril are accustomed to note the veriest trifles even. That was the beginning of his suspicion of Longfield.

It only needed such a happening to make him wary. And further occurrences moved him to disguise that wariness with an appearance of open reciprocity that promised much. With such a beginning he began to study Longfield, finding him not quite so admirable as he had seemed at first. Why, Keene could not say. There was nothing he could put his finger on except that sudden outbreak of passion, which it was to Longfield's credit had been so entirely and promptly controlled.

There was, he noted after a time, a peculiar nicety of pronunciation of certain words, an elaboration of lip movement, which reminded him of something or somebody; who or what he could not decide. So he

watched him, and although he found out nothing his suspicions somehow grew. Longfield from Keene's point of view would bear watching, and must be watched. On Keene's motion they became more friendly than ever. That was a great satisfaction to Longfield. He sent not only a cablegram across the Pacific but many wires to the eastern seaboard to his anxious superiors promising success if he were given time, a free hand, and the wherewithal.

His love affairs prospered extremely. Barbara Le Moyne had all but consented. It was foolish for a man engaged in his engrossing and very risky pursuit to encumber himself with a woman, and love affairs had been tabooed when he received his appointment; but he was a man. She appealed to him as no woman had or could. He took the bit in his teeth at last and offered himself to her. The decision forced upon her thereby, she found herself strangely reluctant to make. Why, she could not tell.

At any rate she asked for time. She told him that she was giving a dinner to a number of her friends and at that dinner she would announce the engagement if she desired or decided to enter into it. With that he had to be content.

It was a large dinner party and he asked her if he might bring to it a friend, a new acquaintance indeed, but a man the most congenial of all he had met in San Francisco.

“Indeed,” he said, “if your decision be as I hope and pray it may, you will see a great deal more of him. I shall require his friendly assistance, perhaps, in case ——”

“Bring him by all means,” she answered quickly, cutting off this approach to claiming her, “and remember that you are to say nothing till I give the word. The announcement, if any, must come from me!”

“I hear and obey,” and perhaps it was the old-world flavor of those words which made it not inappropriate for him to kiss her hand in an old-world way, as he left her.

In truth Longfield was uneasy when Keene was out of his sight. And Keene felt the same way.

“You will come, will you not, my friend?” he urged him in a way that Keene felt was a little odd.

Where had he seen those curious lip motions?

“The fact is,” continued Longfield smoothly, “I rather expect that Miss Le Moyne, who gives the dinner, will have an important announcement to make concerning herself and me that evening.”

His words and manner left no doubt as to the character of the expected announcement. Keene hastened to congratulate him, remarking in conclusion:

“But I am not even acquainted with the young lady, her friends ——”

“ But you are my friend, is it not so? And I very much wish it.”

Keene consented, therefore. He thought he would like to observe Longfield in society, and in the presence of the woman he loved. It would give him a new view, and in a multiplicity of views, like counsellors, was wisdom.

Afterward he would dismiss Longfield from consideration, for failing in his effort to charter a launch and ship a trustworthy crew and also deterred by the great expense, he was going North by rail with intent to scour the coast on horseback. He had got the latitude and longitude where he had been picked up by the *Cambodia*, he had made a careful study of wind, tide, and sea, he had perused the weather reports for the days involved and the coast survey maps of the shore. Thus he had something to go on. If he could not find the woman he might yet find the place without her.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH A DIAMOND RING MAY CONFIRM A SUSPICION AND START A PURSUIT

ONE other circumstance had induced Keene to accept the invitation. Longfield himself had entertained some doubt as to his ability to persuade him to that course and after much thought he had decided upon a bold stroke for the purpose. Just before the acceptance of the invitation he had brought about a playful and apparently entirely innocent rivalry as to which one should sign the check for the refreshments incidental to the occasion. In fact, Longfield went so far as to lay his open palm down upon the "chit" as he invariably called it. He did it in such a way that Keene could not fail to see the great diamond which Longfield wore upon his third finger. His hand was much smaller than Keene's, which for all it had done such rough work in the world was indeed a cleaner hand, and the reference is not to the fact that Longfield's hand was well cared for and outwardly spotless.

For a moment Keene forgot the little strife about the check as he fixed his eyes upon the diamond. Longfield had long since decided that Keene had been

the hero of the quixotic episode, but he was gratified at this absolute confirmation of his suspicions. He could not have failed to notice Keene's start even if he had not been looking for it. He smiled and began casually enough as he signed the paper.

"You admire that diamond?"

On his guard now, too late, Keene nodded.

"It looks to be a very handsome stone," he said.

"It is," returned Longfield, drawing it from his finger and tendering it to Keene. "Examine it closely," he added. "The stone is wonderful and that oriental setting is rare and curious."

Keene took it, went through the pretense of studying critically, although there was no need, for he recognized it instantly. He had not worn it through the hardships of his long dash across the world to forget it easily. He handed it back.

"It is everything you say," he said with an indifference he did not feel.

"It is much more than you think," returned Longfield, easily. "To me, at least."

"How's that?"

"I—er—had it from Miss Le Moyne, the lady you are to meet at the dinner to which I have referred."

"Did she——" began Keene impatiently, then he stopped. He had no right to pursue the investigation further. Questions were not in order. Longfield

vouchsafed no explanation or reply. "You are indeed fortunate," went on Keene.

"Yes," said Longfield. "Valuable and beautiful as is the stone undoubtedly, it is as nothing compared to its former owner, who I have reason to believe will follow her," he paused, "—ah—remembrance."

"You make me more anxious than ever to see the lady who has honored you," said Keene, looking meditatively at his cigarette, and he said it much more truthfully than even the shrewd Longfield fancied.

"By the way," resumed the latter, "it is not yet announced and of course you will make no reference to it?"

Keene looked at him in amazement.

"Certainly not," he answered, abruptly. "I have no acquaintance with the lady at all and our own friendship is of so recent a growth as entirely to preclude any reference to your personal affairs."

"But it will be stronger and warmer with the passing time; it has grown already strong, has it not, my friend?" said Longfield, laying his hand upon Keene's arm.

What was there suggestive in his manner and bearing, Keene questioned silently. And all this made him the more anxious for the approaching festivities where he would see the girl who had so strangely impressed him that night. So she was pledged to

Longfield. How could it be? He had parted from her in indignation, but he had been regretting that ever since. Even yet he did not associate her with the girl of the battlefield beside the river in whose arms his head had lain. But he had a peculiar and definite interest in her. He had been searching for her as well as for the other. Just why he could not tell. He had hardly recognized the fact until this Longfield revelation. Was there anything in the nature of concealed triumph in Longfield's words and actions? Well, Keene would find out that and he would find out everything about Longfield. That dinner promised to be more than a social function, it bade fair to be exciting to a degree.

If it had not been so boundlessly absurd Keene might have promised himself that such a girl as he fancied Miss Le Moyne to be should never marry Longfield if he could help it. For to his curiosity about that man had suddenly succeeded a strong dislike. He sensed the same feeling in Longfield, too. For one thing Longfield was slightly jealous of Keene, Barbara had talked so much about him. It was as if two fencers engaged in a pleasant passage at arms should suddenly be swept, by emotions which they had not anticipated and which they could by no means control, into the passion of a mortal combat.

On his return to civilization Keene had quietly taken up all the conventions he had so easily dis-

pensed with afield. It was therefore an exceptionally well dressed gentleman that Longfield in his smooth and easy phrase presented to Barbara Le Moyne, brilliantly arrayed. On her part she was a woman to whom good clothes were necessary and becoming. They added to her attraction when chosen with taste and worn with dignity as they were. Keene found her a bit daring, a trifle unconventional in her dress—and liked her the better therefor. His second impression of her was much more favorable than his first.

She had never looked better, Longfield told her in a whispered word of intimate greeting, and others more frankly said the same thing. She may have lacked a little perfection in face, but her slender yet well-rounded figure was the very embodiment of grace and beauty. Keene, who had a habit of looking directly at people with a gaze which some women at least found embarrassing, though there was in it only the frank scrutiny a man would give to men for instance, found her altogether charming.

Now there was much more in that interchange of glances upon his presentation to her than were to be found in the customary, polite recognizances of such an introduction. She knew him at once for the man of the ring, as she had often characterized him in her remembrances of the episode, and she could not but betray her surprise, a fact noted by the two men

both watching her closely. Keene, of course, was not surprised at all. He had been prepared by Longfield's story of the diamond. He had that advantage over the woman. Longfield could draw nothing from his unperturbed bearing, except in so far as something might be deduced from his failure to refer to the matter at all. That was rather unaccountable.

Now Barbara, even in her surprise, had immediately noted that reticence also. And she was as quick to decide to let her visitor open the subject or not as he chose as she was to recover her poise. She in turn did not refer to the ring or their previous meeting. She received Keene with the proper cordiality due to a friend of the man who was aspiring to more than friendship with her, and whose hopes might be made certain by that announcement she was almost purposed to make that very evening.

At her silence about the diamond, Longfield was indeed puzzled. Why should she not have spoken? Was it a conspiracy between Keene and the woman? Had they met since the ring episode, without his knowledge? But no, there was Barbara's betrayal of surprise. Yet that might have been accounted for by seeing Keene with Longfield. He frowned and Keene noted and rejoiced in his annoyance. Longfield determined to find out what was toward before the evening was over. Unfortunately for his immediate plans his personal popularity in-

terfered. He was claimed and taken away peremptorily by one of the fair guests to avoid whom even his finesse was for the moment unequal. And Barbara and Keene were left alone between arriving guests. He made prompt use of the opportunity in his downright way.

“You will, I am sure, be glad to learn that my application, made before I met you, for a commission in the United States Engineers has been acted upon favorably, and as soon as some necessary business has been closed I shall be on my way to France, Miss Le Moyne.”

“I am glad, indeed, Mr. Keene. I knew when I used the odious word that it was unmerited,” she replied, strangely glad that he had so promptly made her his confidante. “Will you forgive me?”

“There is nothing I would not forgive you, Miss Le Moyne,” his feelings betraying him into this abrupt utterance, which she felt to be more than a mere compliment.

“And I haven’t thanked you for your generous contribution. You will be glad to know that I sold the ring——”

“Sold it?” he interrupted and she noticed but did not note his surprise.

“Certainly. I should have been glad to have kept it myself, but in this time of my country’s need ——”

“I understand, of course,” he completed her un-

finished sentence. "The decision does you credit. Did the Red Cross benefit much?"

"To the extent of six thousand dollars by your generosity and Mr. Longfield's," she answered just as new arrivals interposed and swept them apart.

So that was the truth, was it? Come to think of it Longfield had not exactly said she had given it to him. What had been his words? Keene's recollection of them was perfect, "he — er — had it" from her, as a "remembrance." Yet he had allowed Keene to believe and undoubtedly intended to convey the idea that it was a gift — *un gage d'amour*!

Keene looked at Barbara, receiving her guests with all her distinction and charm in evidence. He looked beyond her to Longfield, uneasy and restive under his detention by the prettiest and brightest woman in the room — except Barbara of course — and wondered.

Decidedly she should not be permitted to marry Longfield. Yet how prevent it? Perhaps he would better let the affair take its course. Why not? Yet how could she fail to detect in Longfield some of the things he was beginning to feel or see? Is love always blind? Ought she not be told, especially of this very ring episode and Longfield's false assertions? But, there, it was not his affair. Or was it? At any rate he would settle with Longfield in some way. He would discover who and what he was, his

business! Then he would tell Miss Le Moyne and she could do as she pleased. It was no concern of his. He was not in love with her, or with anyone, unless it were the woman he was seeking. He had been in love often in his younger days, but he had drifted away from women. He had other things to think of. He wished he had met Miss Le Moyne before.

Yes, this girl was most attractive. He had never seen such a neck and arms, no not even in lands where nature had not been impeded by civilization in its effort to develop womanly perfection. Or stop, he had never seen any except those that had encircled his head, that had been outlined against the blue sky as the woman he sought had bent over him by the river that day of desperate hazard.

For a moment he forgot the present woman thinking of the elusive woman of the past. His abstraction gave her opportunity on her part in a pause in her welcomings to study him and once again their eyes met. Her own eyes did not fall before his level glance. She sustained it unflinchingly. She, too, had the habit of confronting friend and enemy with steady gaze. This was the second time that evening their glances had met and they clashed like engaged sword blades. Despite herself her heart beat a little faster. She would not look down, but it was not until he looked away, his attention necessarily distracted by a questioner, that she could view him critically.

She was well pleased with what she saw in him; strength, power, indomitable will, pride, and rough firmness; for all his thoughts had gone elsewhere, she thought, but little aware of his growing interest in her. He reminded her of someone. She had seen him before, somewhere, prior to that diamond episode. She tried to think where and when and could not. Yet she wondered the same thought had not come to her in the hall that other night.

Longfield's eyes never left her save for his glances at Keene, but so swift and so subtle and so well concealed had been whatever emotions had been evoked in either the girl or the newcomer by this meeting that even his close scrutiny detected nothing of importance. He had not, of course, heard the brief conversation between them, but he had been sure it had been about the ring. What had they said and why had they been silent before him, only to speak when he could not hear? He would find out.

In any mood doubtless Longfield was dangerous, but in that mood — ! Well, if Keene had realized he would not have cared. Perhaps he might have rejoiced. He liked to meet men who could carry the fighting to him if he did not anticipate them. The old phrase serves: "Foeman worthy of his steel."

That was Longfield. By a curious inversion it was also Miss Le Moyne! She was a woman to be won. He felt himself almost a traitor to the other woman.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEREIN ONCE AGAIN THE MALAY KRIS CONFIRMS THE TALE

“**I** AM very glad to meet any friend of Mr. Longfield’s,” Barbara had said when they had been introduced, “and I think I shall honor him by allowing his friend to take me in to dinner.”

It had been a graceful compliment to both men. Longfield did not like the plan but he could not protest, only bow his acquiescence. She assigned Longfield to the prettiest young woman present, and the other guests having been appropriately paired she nodded to the butler who had appeared in the doorway, laid her hand on Keene’s arm and led the way to the dining room. Keene looked at that hand. It was not ridiculously small *à l’américaine*, neither was it large. He found it a hand much to his taste, firm, well kept, lacking the daintier touch of little use, perhaps, but such a hand as he liked. He had a passion for good hands. Longfield’s now ——

“Doubtless you intend to do much honor to us both by giving me this coveted place,” he said, “but I am bold enough to appropriate all to myself.”

“Do you always take all, Mr. Keene?” she asked.

“ Unless it is a matter of diamonds,” he answered, lightly.

“ That, of course,” she replied in the same vein, “ but in other things you want? ” she repeated, banteringly.

“ Always, provided —— ”

“ Yes, provided? ”

“ I am the winner and the stake is worth taking,” he answered, rather grimly, as they made their way down the drawing room.

“ And am I? ” she laughed, with that utter unconventionality she could safely exhibit, being past mistress of the art.

“ You are decidedly worth taking,” he replied in the same spirit of badinage.

“ But you are not the winner,” she flashed back at him.

“ Not yet,” he answered.

For the life of him he could not say why he made such reply, nor account for the sudden gravity of his tone. Nor could she. After that enigmatic answer she bade her guests be seated and addressed her next remark to the man on her other side, leaving Keene well satisfied with the continuance of the somewhat romantic beginning of the acquaintance, which would tend whither it would and develop however it might, he decided.

The dinner in service, appointments, and viands

was like the hostess, unconventional and delightful. Keene ate little, drank less, and talked still less. Longfield did quite the reverse. He kept the table interested and amused with his witty and brilliant, if somewhat cynical, sallies. And there were many present who could lend themselves admirably to the conversation which sparkled and scintillated under his lead.

It seemed to Keene that he was being shown up as a poor stick in such a gathering by his more lively and brilliant friend. Keene did not care. He was studying Longfield and Miss Le Moyne—with a growing distaste for one and a growing interest in the other. He did wonder, as the ball of repartee was being tossed back and forth, if she were thinking of him as a dull dog unable to hold his own, and once as she turned to him he voiced his suspicion. But with that boldness which was characteristic she told him directly of his mistake.

“On the contrary, silence in a man is like a low voice in a woman—sometimes.”

“You have the one most excellent thing,” he rejoined, glad that she realized that he refrained from speech by choice and not of necessity.

“And you the other,” she added. “Don’t spoil it.”

He smiled again, grimly as usual but with such obvious pleasure that Longfield caught and resented it. His eyes narrowed a second and Barbara Le

Moyne happened to see him just at that unlucky instant. Could she make that announcement Longfield craved and expected? Did she wish to as much as she had? Was there anything in this silent, rather grim figure of a man beside her that gave her pause? What had he said? "Not yet." She found herself trembling a little. With disapproval of herself she glanced at Keene. She was surprised to find him studying her. His gaze was bent upon her neck, her shoulder next to him, her bare arm!

Now such steady survey of her person might have insulted her. Normally she would have resented it indignantly. But there was nothing in the least suggestive in his scrutiny. No—appraisal, admiration, and a little unwonted bewilderment delightful to detect in one so sure of himself apparently—nothing else. She found herself coloring a little as she wondered why he looked at her so. Her heart did not slow its beating, on the contrary; for a moment she felt a strange impulse to confront him open-armed, and forgetful of the others say,

"Here, look again, is this what you seek?"

Instead she forced herself to turn away. She glanced to the other end of the table. Longfield was holding forth as usual. She caught his words. Glad to welcome any diversion she asked gaily,

"What's that you say about women's dress, Mr. Longfield?"

“Whatever it was it does not apply to you, dear lady,” was his ready answer.

“And why not?”

“Because you are a law unto yourself.”

“And we others?” asked his partner.

“Are creatures of someone else’s laws.”

“Whose?”

“What matter so long as it is someone else?”

“What matter, indeed!” answered the girl with a toss of her pretty head. “Of course you know that we women dress to please you men.”

“Perhaps, but not in the way you mean it,” he answered, and by now the whole table listened.

“Explain, please,” said the hostess, coming to the rescue of her guest.

“Well, perhaps you will admit that success in life, for a woman, depends upon the creation in the mind of a man of a feeling of superiority, as evanescent as unwarranted,” he went on, smiling in such a way as to take the sting out of his words. “Now, no one can think a sensible man really likes to see a woman wearing a fur cape on her back in midsummer, and an open-necked chiffon frock with silk stockings and pumps in midwinter. Intrinsically the custom is as absurd as most things women do. It should not give pleasure, yet it does.”

“Why? Why?” came from one and another about the table.

“Because it flatters his self-esteem that she does it,” he replied. “It is so easy for him to see his fancied superiority in his own more sensible clothing.”

“The more foolish women, the more sensible men appear,” remarked another bold iconoclast.

“Exactly,” commented Longfield.

“Which is the more sensibly dressed tonight, Longfield,” put in Keene, quietly, “we in this ridiculous garb we wear, or Miss — any young lady here?”

“A hit, a palpable hit!” quoted Longfield, easily, not a bit disconcerted. “When men discuss women, or their ages, it is always of those not present that they speak, you must admit, my dear friend.”

“I’m afraid your idea of women is not so high as I have believed, Mr. Longfield,” said Barbara Le Moyne.

“It is as high as her functions, Miss Le Moyne,” he answered, cheerfully.

“And what are they?” she asked him.

“To be beautiful and charming in youth.”

“And when she is old?”

“Never to grow old.”

“You trifle,” she countered a little peremptorily. “I insist upon an answer. What are her other functions?”

“You will have it?” he asked, with sudden grav-

ity. He was not lacking in courage—anyone could see that.

“Yes.”

“To be a good house—f—mother when the time comes.”

No one but Keene caught the beginning of the word so quickly cut off. But he had heard and noticed. He added the little slip to others he had noted. Where had he seen that peculiar lip movement when Longfield pronounced certain words? Ah! He had it. His heart leaped. He recalled a professor of modern languages from college days! He mouthed words like that. The sudden revelation was astonishing! Longfield should never marry Miss Le Moyne now. That engagement was as good as broken. Pity someone could not warn her and so forestall the expected announcement that night! Yet his face had never looked more inscrutable under the fierce and searching flash of a glance Longfield, conscious of his slip, or almost slip, had thrown at him. He had resumed his study of her lower forearm, and thus had his head bent again when Barbara Le Moyne turned toward him.

“And you?” she asked, her voice trembling a little despite herself. Somehow so much depended upon the answer—more than she realized. “What do you think, Mr. Keene?”

“I never analyze women.”

“Why not?”

“I love them. You can’t analyze what you love,” was his daring and unexpected reply, for no one could look less the lover of women than he.

“All of us?” asked the young girl who sat next to him.

“All of you.”

“But someone in particular?” she continued, rather presumptuously, Miss Le Moyne thought, yet she found herself listening breathlessly for his answer.

“Someone in particular, some day assuredly,” he answered, rising, glass in hand and flinging a challenging glance down the long table.

Certainly he was not looking at Barbara Le Moyne, yet she seemed to feel that he was speaking to her. What had he said? “Not yet——”

“It seems to me,” said Longfield, easily, “that my position is the more worthy. I am not blind. I do not fail to see what is under my nose. Yet I yield to no man in my admiration for woman in her high and holy place.”

“And that place?” asked his companion, who was given to questions, it seemed.

“I repeat it, wife, mother, and always beautiful.”

It was cleverly done. In a stroke he reinstated himself. Even the most frivolous responds to beauty and motherhood, eternal attributes of woman.

“You think we cannot play a man’s part ever, Mr. Longfield?” asked his hostess.

“Not without disaster, dear Miss Le Moyne, and with so many great parts of her own, why should woman seek to enter into man’s difficult, not to say dangerous rôles?”

“Let me tell you a story about an adventure of my own,” she exclaimed, eagerly, his words suggesting something to her.

“I always said you were an exception to the rules,” he returned, quickly, and the compliment was, like the fact, so obvious that it did not enhance his popularity with the others.

“About two months ago,” she began, ignoring his pretty speech, “I was up in southern Oregon on a camping trip. One day before we broke camp I was riding through the woods to a certain high hill ——”

“Are you going to tell them of the time you mistook me for an escaping criminal, Miss Le Moyne? That proves my exception ——” Longfield began.

“Not that comedy of errors this time, Mr. Longfield,” she answered, gaily. “There were soldiers before Agamemnon, you know. This adventure preceded yours and did not turn out so pleasantly. It was a tragedy.”

“I beg your pardon. I am all attention,” he said, contritely.

“Get on, Babs, we’re dying of curiosity,” interposed her most intimate friend.

“Well, I came out of the trees to a clearing, where I got a view of the sea——”

She happened to glance down at the table at that moment and caught a glimpse of Keene’s hand, clenched tightly as if he would fain hold life in his grasp. It was a strong, well-made hand, albeit a bit hard, and it lay on the table absolutely motionless.

“Yes, go on, Miss Le Moyne,” said another, as she paused a second time.

She looked up. They were all looking at her except Keene, who seemed to be contemplating his own hand for a change. As a matter of fact, there were some things to which even he was unequal. His heart was beating like mad at this prelude. Was this the woman? Had he found her? It must be. The North Woods! The headland overlooking the sea! Suddenly he remembered that headland. He had marked it as the schooner drifted in with the flood. That accounted for— He would wait. He concentrated his gaze on his hand, clenched it tighter, wondering vaguely how it could lie so still, and listened with his very soul.

Among those who watched her none was more alive to what she was saying than Longfield. He sensed the fact that she was about to tell him something it was necessary he should find out, to reveal a



Rising, glass in hand and flinging a challenging glance

secret scarcely less valuable to him than she was. To do him justice he was thinking more of her than the secret at that moment. So, too, was Keene, although neither of the men realized or would have admitted that. And there was good reason for their thoughts. She was enough to make any man forget anything but herself.

Before Longfield loved her he had analyzed her face, as he had just declared he had analyzed all women. He wondered how he could have come to the conclusion that she was not beautiful. For there that night she was radiant. She had a story to tell sufficiently thrilling. It would refute her lover's contention, she thought. Her lover? Was Longfield that? On his part, yes. His eager eyes would have told her and anyone if she had lacked other source of information. But was she to allow it to continue—that passion? Would she give him herself? Could she make that announcement for which he waited? Not yet. Keene's words! She glanced again at the silent, tense figure of the man at her side. Not yet. If others saw Keene or noticed him they thought him, as before, a rather dull man, certainly an unresponsive one. For he made no sign. Was he to take Longfield's place, or the place he had sought in her heart? Preposterous! And yet— She went on, the whole table electric with emotion and interest.

“ When I got there I saw five brown men, savages

of some kind, and a white man, on a bluff far below me by the edge of the river where it empties into the sea. I had never seen such men."

"Describe them, please," interposed Longfield, looking swiftly and searchingly at Keene—no need for the latter to question. At last he had found her.

"They wore highly colored turbans and short jackets with short trousers. They were barefooted, and around each man's waist was a gleaming sash or girdle of many hues which shone in the sunlight."

Keene lifted his head and for an instant looked directly at Longfield. He understood the latter's interest in him now. And Keene ever loved to force the fighting.

"Sounds like Malays, doesn't it?" he observed, moved by a sudden defiant impulse, "though whence they came or what they could be doing I can't imagine."

It was ever Keene's way to attack. He knew now who Longfield was, or rather what he was. And in his insolent glance Longfield read detection. The veneer was gone. It was war to the knife between these two men, fiercer by far than that the Malays had waged, and for every guerdon for which men have ever struggled.

"Yes, they were," said the woman. "I found it out afterward." She called her butler to her and

gave him a whispered direction and went on. "Without a word of warning they attacked the white man."

"Didn't you scream or call?" asked one, suddenly.

"With all my might; but the distance was too great for my voice to carry, besides they were too excited to hear."

Keene registered a note of thankfulness for that attempted warning while she continued the story.

"He made a magnificent fight. I'll never forget it. Finally he killed the last one and then he fell himself, dead, apparently."

"What did you do, Babs?" asked one.

"I should have fainted dead away," murmured another.

"I mounted my horse and rode down the slope to help him."

"Brave girl!" exclaimed Longfield.

The words were trite and somehow jarring, yet he really meant them. Amid a murmur of concurrence from the table she finished her story.

"And when you got to him there were no Malays there?" asked Longfield, in amazement, at the end of it.

"None; and when I came back from the camp the man was gone, too!"

"And you learned nothing about him?" asked one.

"Nothing, except that he was a hero and a gentleman."

“Did he tell you that?” asked Longfield, with just the suggestion of a sneer, too subtle for any ear but hers—and Keene’s—to catch it.

“I could see it myself with my own eyes,” she replied, with dignity.

“Sure you didn’t dream this, Babs?” asked the girl nearest her.

“Sure. I couldn’t dream this, could I?” asked Miss Le Moyne, taking from the waiting butler a curious bent ivory-handled knife with a sharp and curving blade.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW LONGFIELD THOUGHT HE HAD MADE SURE OF KEENE
AND THE WOMAN

BARBARA held the beautiful but sinister-looking weapon up before all the interested and astonished guests, turning it about so that the light rippled up and down the brightly polished, gracefully curved yet cruel blade.

“What is it?” asked one.

Impulsively she turned to Longfield and extended it toward him. Why, she could not tell. Was it only because she had become accustomed to referring problems to his well-stored mind and wide experience.

“Do you know?” she asked.

“I think it’s—but ask Keene, he’s closer to you than I,” he answered, with a meaning she sensed but could make little of.

Reluctantly in her heart she turned to Keene. She had no other course open to her. He forced himself to look at her and at the knife she held out to him. He forced himself to speak steadily, though not in all the perils of his long journey had his heart beat more terribly.

"Certainly," he said, "it's a kris, a Malay knife."

As he spoke she caught a glimpse of Longfield's face reflected in a Venetian mirror. She saw such triumph, such malevolence as almost made her shudder. It was only for a second, but it was enough. As he composed his face, because he had learned it was rarely safe to let his real emotions appear, she turned and looked again into the steady eyes of Keene, hoping that Longfield had not noted that she had caught him for a second off his guard—as indeed he had not.

What did Keene's eyes tell her in this third bold and definite exchange of glances? His secrets? Nothing at all, save a certain admiration which thrilled her. Yet there was something that stirred her recollection. What was it? Where had she seen this man before? Who was he? What was his attraction? She could not answer these questions. Perhaps her heart beat too rapidly for that cool weighing of things necessary to judicial decisions.

Her story had been a great success. She had told it with force and skill in such a way as to lose none of its great dramatic value. They all rose as she did. Keene took the knife into the drawing room where he explained its use to them all as they drank their coffee. Longfield finally came toward her and spoke openly thus:

“Have you not something else to tell our friends tonight, dear lady?” he began, with great daring.

She glanced swiftly at Keene again. She recalled Longfield’s changed face of a few moments before. The engineer still held the knife in his hand. He looked at them.

“Not tonight,” she answered, decisively.

The steel vibrated in its sheath, velvet covered, but Longfield took the rebuff without wincing.

“Tomorrow?” he asked, with more gentle urgency that touched her a little.

“Perhaps,” she replied, though she felt that time could make no difference.

Keene, who was nearest, could not help overhearing it all and, putting together Longfield’s previous boasting and his present request, he knew what had been asked and refused. His heart leaped. He had found the woman, she would give him the clue, he would find—stop, what did it matter what else he would find! He had found the woman! She was not for Longfield. For whom, then?

If Keene was the first to leave the dinner party, Longfield was the last. Keene deliberately concealed himself in the shrubbery, waited till Longfield came out and then followed him secretly. He threw scruples to the wind. He was playing too great a game to let anything interfere? It would be his last opportunity to shadow him, for before morning he

knew that Longfield would put men upon his trail with instructions not to leave it for an instant. What he had to do he must do tonight, if indeed there would be time.

Longfield was in high good humor. True, the public announcement he craved had not been made, but he was a happy man, nevertheless, for in the brief half hour he had alone with her after the departure of the others he had scored a triumph and incidentally had put Keene out of the running, or at least so he fancied. He had sensed Keene as a rival during that eventful dinner, as he had known him for a quarry for some time, and for that reason he had hurried matters.

"Why," he had asked her, "did you not give me the happiness I long for by announcing our engagement to your friends?"

"Why did you look so hatefully at your friend?" she had countered.

He was too wise to deny. He would play the questioning game according to her lead.

"Did I?"

"I saw you twice."

"Well, I admit it," was his unexpected answer. "The fact is your story——"

"Oh, I thought it had do with that. I seemed to feel an electric tension in the very air."

"You told it so well."

Keene's heart
leaped. He
had found
the woman.
She was not
for Longfield



“It was not that.”

“No; I will be frank with you. I have asked you to be my wife. You have a right to know all there is to know about me. I violate the confidence of my superiors in so doing, but I must tell you.”

“I shall reveal nothing you confide in me,” she protested, a little flattered by the thought of the coming confidence; and, looking at her, shrewdly estimating her, he knew she would be true.

“Your course in that emergency proves that. Well, then——”

She nodded, and in her eagerness to hear she took a step nearer to him. He lengthened the pause purposely. The delay worked in his interest. He was a past master of dramatic effects.

“Yes?” she said in eager curiosity.

“I am not exactly what I seem,” he began, mysteriously. “I am——” He paused again. He glanced about him as if to be sure they were unobserved and would be unheard——“an agent of the government,” he continued, “of the Secret Service. I am here on a most important quest. There is a vital secret. I suspected Keene might know it, but I was not sure. I learned that he did tonight. It changed all my liking into hate—the hate I feel for the enemies of my country.”

Now, in all this Longfield had kept strictly within the facts. He could and did speak so honestly that, in

spite of herself, she was convinced of what he said. It rang true and it rang triumphant.

“And you made the discovery here tonight, in my house, at my table?”

“Dear lady, yes.”

“From whom?”

“You.”

“I?”

“Your story, that white man, Keene——”

“Was he the man?”

“I believe so.”

She was surprised beyond expression at first. He watched her closely and had wit enough not to interrupt her thoughts.

“Impossible,” she murmured slowly, at last. “That was a much older man, full bearded——”

Her thoughts raced lightning-like between the past and the present. What had he said——“Not yet.” What had he meant by that? Had he recognized her? No; obviously not. Yet he must have suspected something. Ah, that was why he looked at her neck and arm. She recalled his former look and blushed again. Why had she been so blind? That was why he held his hand so tightly clenched upon the table, so still, while she told the story. What a man! And she had not recognized him. But now her recollection was quickened she remembered. She lifted her head and looked at Longfield.

“It is he; I am certain of it, I know it,” he said, earnestly.

“Yes; you are right. What a man!”

He stifled the pang of jealousy and, adroit as ever, did not seek to argue the point with her.

“A brave and daring man, indeed,” he assented, gravely. “And the more dangerous on that account. We have been following him half way across the world. He has baffled us everywhere, and practically single-handed, alone” — again she felt a thrill of pride in the man to whom she was now doubly drawn because she had seen him fight, and because she had helped him — “but at last he has been run down, and you and I have done it.”

He had never looked better, she thought, with swift change of mood. For patriotism was one of her great passions, and Longfield got the benefit of the association. There was nothing venomous in Longfield’s face now, no virulent hatred; only a sort of proud, patriotic triumph. Yet his countenance only told half he felt. He was on guard, and that always meant concealment. So she at once responded to the association of herself and him in the dangerous enterprise for her country, as she thought.

“And he is an enemy to the government?” she asked.

“One of the greatest — a traitor and a murderer as well.”

“And you will thwart him — capture him?”

“I will, with your help.”

The Longfield stock was up. Poor Keene, waiting outside in the darkness of the garden, bulked less large in the woman's mind.

“I will help,” she said slowly, at last giving him her hand, almost convinced against her will by the calm assurance with which the terribly damning charges were made.

He took it and, bending toward her, asked:

“And will you go a step further and, from my ally, become my wife?”

What mad whim possessed her she never knew. Was it an unconscious realization that the threads of her life had somehow become tangled with those of Keene's and Longfield's in some strange way. Did some fate urge her on? Was there no other choice?

Leaving her hand in his, she nodded slowly.

“When we have prevented his treachery and brought his designs to naught,” she answered.

And with the answer sprang up a sudden hope that he, or they, might fail. Was it because of Keene, or herself, or both? He gave her no time for reflection. He looked at her quickly, kissed her hand, and she wondered why he had not ventured further—and was glad that he had not.

“Very good,” he said, solemnly. “I shall hold you to that promise.”

For a second she seemed to see a flash of that resolution, which, with its tinge of venom she had noted twice before. But she put by the thought.

"Tell me what it is all about," she began, slowly withdrawing her hand, "so that I can really help."

"Tomorrow," he had answered, and was gone.

It was better that she should be left unsatisfied, expectant, eager for his return. There was no great hurry now. He held all the threads in his hands. It would be easy to follow the trail now.

"Tomorrow!" he repeated to himself triumphantly, as he turned into the dark, tree-shaded street, utterly ignorant that Keene was following him. He hummed a little air as he walked, an air he would never have whispered even, save that his triumph had gone to his head and he had, for the moment, forgotten his rôle.

He used every trick of an art by no means insignificant to throw off any possible pursuit, more from habit and natural caution, than for any other reason, since Keene, equally subtle, gave no sign of his presence. Longfield finally entered the back door of a building in the lowest and loneliest quarter of the town. Within, Keene could not follow him. The engineer made his way to the front of the building, took one swift comprehending look at a dusty sign, read a name and turned away satisfied.

What made him retrace his steps until he stopped

by the gate of the lovely garden in which Barbara Le Moyne's house was set, he would not admit, even to himself.

He stood by the entrance looking in toward the distant house a long time, before he reentered the garden. And why he did that foolish thing he wilfully concealed from himself. Yet, the reason was not far to seek. Love at first sight! He had laughed at that as at a romancer's dream. It was impossible—a sign of weakness! To see a woman once and love her? Absurd! What woman could so take possession of a man's soul, a strong man who had fought the world and the flesh and the devil—when he had not played with them—as to make that true?

Yet stop. This was the third time he had seen her. It was easy for him to picture her upon the height, watching him fight that wonderful battle after her futile cry of warning. He had comported himself like a man that day, he thought with pride and satisfaction. He recalled what wonderment had filled his mind when he saw her white shoulder. He recalled their meeting in the public hall, his strange resentment that she—why she rather than any other woman?—should think him a slacker! Then he thought of her as he had seen her a few hours ago, in all the splendor and glory of her matchless youth.

She was beautiful to him. He had spoken truly in the particular case, however he had romanced in

general. He did not analyze her—he loved her. Yes, he had something to do—a great thing indeed. And she had made the doing of it possible. It was not less important, but now more, because in the doing of it he would win—her!

Longfield? It was impossible she could care for him. He would reveal himself inevitably, Keene thought. He actually dismissed Longfield from his calculations. He did not make the mistake of despising his enemy. He realized fully the power that was back of that man, the forces upon which he could and would call, but he felt confident of his ability to deal with him, as he had dealt with the same forces across half the world. He had discovered too much about him. He pieced together rapidly one trifling thing after another in swift synthesis, and Longfield was damned.

Keene opened the garden gate and entered. If he had been a love-sick boy he could have done no differently. He stalked boldly down the long path toward the house, caught sight of someone moving across the terrace, stopped, sought concealment under the trees a second time. He might have difficulty in explaining his presence if questioned; the real reason would sound too absurd, he thought, smiling grimly, as he waited watching.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH KEENE KISSES BARBARA LE MOYNE IN THE
GARDEN THAT NIGHT

BARBARA LE MOYNE could not sleep. The events of the night had been too exciting and too exacting. The repetition of the story recalled the hardy boldness of the man, the way he had looked at her, the words he had said, both in the hall and finally that very night, especially at the dinner. Both looks and words were in keeping with his character as she had divined it. She was now half plighted to Longfield, conditionally his promised wife. Keene was the condition. Yet, strangely enough, she thought ten times about Keene to once about Longfield. Indeed, Longfield only came into her mind incidentally. Keene was a traitor, a seditionary, engaged in some terrible, damning plot against the country in the awful juncture. She had to force this conclusion into her mind against her will; or was it against her heart? It had been hard to believe this even with Longfield's persuasive insinuating words, fresh in her ear, it became harder now that he had gone.

She would know all about it tomorrow. She per-

suaded herself that she could settle her doubts then and finally. She glanced at the faintly glowing radium numerals of the boudoir clock from the *chaise longue* upon which she had thrown herself, dressed just as she had been at dinner, after Longfield's departure. Tomorrow? Today! It was past two in the morning. Longfield was so sure. Yet, it could not be. Keene did not look the part assigned to him. She would have staked her life on his loyalty before Longfield spoke. His courage she knew. Too bad that such a man — could it be that Longfield was mistaken? Did she wish to marry him? Could she? Had she not as it were staked her life, her happiness on Keene's soul? If he were a true man, what then? What had he said? "Not yet."

She could not sleep. She could not stop thinking. Yet she must. She would go to bed happily, perhaps to sleep. She took off her dress and began her delayed preparations for the night. And then she stopped abruptly.

The confinement of the room, the house even, seemed to grow strangely irksome to her. She could stand the constraint no longer. She craved the freedom of the outdoors. She ever loved the open sky, even in the night-time. She would go into the garden. Perhaps she could think better there, more clearly. A less courageous woman might have been afraid at that hour. She had proved her intrepidity

before. She feared nothing. Besides a call would rouse the servants and bring swift help.

She went over toward the window and picking up a long light wrap, which she put on in place of the discarded evening dress, she stood a moment looking out. The moon had risen, the sky was partly clouded. The garden dimly illumined lay before her. She was conscious of the wonted chorus of the night in its minor keys. Otherwise it was very still. Down the long walk Longfield had gone with the port of a conqueror. She had watched him go, proud of him, assured. Now it was different. Keene had gone that way, too, although she had not seen him go. She turned from the window, crossed the room, opened the door, descended the stairs to the hall, unlocked the outer door and slipped out into the moonlight on the broad terrace.

What was she about to do? What did she seek? What drew her on? She closed the door behind her and looked about her. All was still. The air was fragrant with the perfume of the flowers which grew in such semi-tropic profusion. She saw no one. She heard nothing, but the usual natural noises of the windless autumn night. She went slowly across the terrace as if in a dream. She put her foot upon the top step of the stairs, which led to the lower level, as if under a spell.

From his place under the deep shadow of the pun-

gent eucalyptus he saw her clearly, the light of the moon fell directly upon her through a cloud rift. It turned her advanced foot, in its white satin slipper, into a flash of silver. She floated, he thought, angel-like down the broad stone stair. As she drew nearer he saw her eyes shining like stars would shine on a darker night. The charm, the witchery of the hour were upon him also. Tremors as unwonted and unfamiliar as they were delicious swept over him. Where was his courage? She was approaching him. Her feet were on the walk. She was abreast the tree!

What had he said, she thought for the hundredth time? "Not yet!" And then he stepped out from the shadow and faced her abruptly. She was startled for the moment, of course. She recognized him, stifled a scream, shrank back, gathered her outer garment a little closer to her, across her breast, and then stood ready for whatever further action the extraordinary situation demanded.

Why had he come? Yet, he had been so much in her thoughts that it seemed quite natural for him to be there. It was as though she had expected him. Surprise gave place to wonder. There was no resentment. His presence did not strike her as unusual even. Had she not come to meet him? She forgot for the moment in the glamour of that mysterious meeting that he had just been branded by her almost

acknowledged lover as a traitor, a murderer, an enemy to her country. He was just the strong man who had fought—was it for her?—who had fallen in the moment of victory, the man she had recalled to life. His life, by rights, was hers. There, that night, in the still garden, alone, together, her heart went out to him. What had he said? He broke the silence and, as if in telepathic response, his first abrupt word was——

“Now!”

And that greeting did startle her. It was so apt, it chimed in so well with her thought, that she could not fail to show her amazement. She stepped back a pace again. He misunderstood her movement.

“Don’t be afraid,” he began, and then continued, “now, the hour has come for an explanation.”

“I’m not afraid,” answered the woman, and indeed she was not. “What are you doing here in my garden at this hour of the night?”

“I certainly did not expect or hope to see you, although I willed you to come with all my heart,” he answered; was it because of that call of his heart that she had come, that she was there?—“but, I have been in too many difficult situations not to realize the supreme importance of taking advantage of my opportunities, never mind how they come about,” he continued, with his usual downright simplicity.

“We are alone, of course?” he added, throwing a careless glance about him.

“So far as I know, you and I are the only people in the world,” she answered, half unconsciously, quoting his own words to her before she left him that fateful morning by the river.

He recognized those words, too, and his heart leapt to the recollection of the past and the reality of the present. That quotation meant much to him.

“You remember I said that?” he exclaimed, gladly, a note of triumphant satisfaction in his voice.

“Everything that happened on the shore of Bay San Juan is etched upon my memory.”

She was quite unconscious of the fact that she had given him the clue he sought. He realized it afterward, but not then, for then he was thinking only of her.

“I recalled only a woman seen through a mist of blood, her white arms supporting my head. And not until you told the story, did I recognize you. How could I have been so blind?”

“What were you doing there?” she asked, with a directness that matched his own. “Tell me. I’ve been so anxious to know.”

“Hiding something I had carried half way across the world, to secure which a hundred lives have been laid down.”

“What was it? Gold? Silver? Jewels?——”

“Platinum!”

She looked down at the white setting of a priceless emerald she was wearing.

“Platinum!” she exclaimed, in some disappointment, “I don’t understand.”

“It has become the most valuable of all the metals,” he explained. “The side that cannot get it will lose the war. The Germans would give the world for the quantity I have stored.”

The Germans! His unlucky remark recalled Longfield to her and the fact that the man before her was accused of odious crimes. She did not have to wait until tomorrow. She had chanced to learn the secret. Keene was a traitor. This precious metal was for the enemy. His unfortunate words which she so completely misunderstood, confirmed her mistaken belief. Longfield was right. Patriotism had been her greatest passion. She had not known love for man. Love for country stood in its place. She was fiercely loyal and accordingly resentful.

“I forgot where I had concealed it,” he went on, not seeing her changed face in the half light and not noticing her slight withdrawal, “that blow on the head, you know. I was seeking the woman who knew—you—to find out. Tell me, now, the name of the river, give me the clue so that I may——”

“I tell nothing to traitors, to enemies of the

United States, to men who would betray her to Germany; who would contribute to the enemy what we so greatly desire; who would make profit out of our need!"

The bitter words burst from her. He had not expected such an attack. They incensed him and they hurt him more. She had called him a slacker before. That was bad enough. But this!—it was intolerable! How could she so mistake him? He would give the world for her good opinion, too. He stepped forward and caught her shoulder and arm roughly in his resentment.

"Who told you that?" he demanded, fiercely, with difficulty refraining from shaking her.

"Mr. Longfield," was the prompt reply. "Take your hands off me, instantly, sir."

"Longfield! That damned, cowardly, sneaking——"

"Stop, he is the man I am going to marry. Release me at once, Mr. Keene, or I shall call for help."

"Going to marry Longfield!" he exclaimed, in his surprise, releasing her. She had not made the announcement Longfield had predicted and that had given him hope. He forgot, for the moment, that she did not know all that he had learned about that man. "Do you know who and what he is?" he demanded, imperiously.

"Yes."

“And with that knowledge you still intend——”

“When we have secured the defeat of your treasonable undertaking to sell your hidden platinum to Germany, and brought you to punishment, we shall be married.”

“Oh, that’s if, is it?”

“Yes.”

“Good! When I am confounded and laid by the heels you have promised to marry this Longfield?”

“I have; though why that interests you, I cannot at all see.”

“It interests me, because I mean to marry you myself.”

“Marry you, a traitor?”

“It is war between Longfield and his country and me and mine. You have promised to wait till I am undone. Very well. When he is exposed I shall claim you. We fight not merely for the white treasure, but for you.”

“You have seen me but thrice in my life,” she protested, breathless, almost convinced, swept away by his passion, “you cannot——”

“Four times! Once through that mist of blood and dust, when you bent over me, your white arms showing against the blue of the sky by the river; a second time in the bright light of that hall, when you called me a slacker; a third time in your dining room, and now here in the garden in this moonlight divine.

I'm no easily influenced boy. I've lived close to death and have disdained it. Life has meant nothing but a chance to get something done, now it means something more—everything. It means—you."

"Your quest—the platinum?"

"When that is settled and Longfield with it, I shall claim the right to try to make you love me——"

"I can never marry an enemy, a traitor."

"No, by God! And you shall not."

He lifted his hand, as if taking an oath. He had not defended himself. After that first passionate outbreak he had not even accused Longfield. She had promised Longfield to wait. This man asked nothing more. Could she agree to that without disloyalty to Longfield? Keene had gained much in this interview. Once again she was swayed toward him. He was as assured as Longfield had been. Which was the true man? Who could solve the mystery?

"Tell me the name of that place by the river," he asked her, "that I may hasten there and come back to you for your decision."

She shook her head. No matter where her wandering heart led her she must keep faith. And if Keene accused Longfield, the latter had done the same. Keene would not defend himself there that night, and Longfield, being absent, could not. "I cannot," she murmured, regretfully but determinedly.

“ You mean you will not.”

“ Have it that way, if you will,” she replied. “ I must play fair between two ——”

“ If I can forget your face for a moment, I am sure that the place will come back to me now,” he said, bravely, understanding and respecting her decision. “ You will hold yourself free until the issue is decided between Longfield and myself—as to which is the villain and the traitor?” he asked her.

“ I will. Nor shall he get any help from me,” she said, impulsively. “ If my fate is to tremble in the balance my own hand shall not incline the scale either way. I will play fair,” she repeated.

“ That’s all I can ask. Good-bye.”

She gave him her hand. Her wrap fell back a little as she extended her white arm—the arm he remembered and loved. Palm met palm. He stared at her in all her white and radiant glory a moment and then he swept her rudely to himself. He kissed her full and fair upon the lips, again and again. Hard, rough he was. He did things that way. No tender melting of lip on lip was that. Force, power! They thrilled her none the less—those kisses. Longfield’s lips had just touched her hand. This man dragged her to him with a passionate grasp that hurt her. It was his way.

She remembered afterward, in horror, that she had neither withdrawn nor withheld herself from

that mad passionate embrace, from that meeting of the lips—that she had for the moment given back his kisses.

Before she could say a word, before she could protest, before she could recover herself and thrust him from her, if indeed, she so willed, he released her and was gone. And, as he had lain by the river side in the morning, wounded, almost unto death, listening to her departing footfalls, so she, like him, quickened into new life, stood in the silent garden in the night, listening to his footsteps until she could hear no more—longing for the sound of them. If he would only come back and kiss her again!

She was alone in the garden in the mystic night again. She stood still, a curious feeling of unreality about her as the blood rushed to her face at the thought of that mad embrace and madder return. How dared he? Longfield had only kissed her hand. Keene, a traitor? Was not she the traitor?

Were the two men fighting for her? To which one did her heart incline? Keene—Longfield? How dared he kiss her lips. They were for no man but him to whom she would give herself. Longfield—Keene?

BOOK III

“ Find the Treasure ”

CHAPTER XVI

WHEREIN BARBARA LE MOYNE AGREES TO REWARD THE
VICTOR

SO KEENE went away, at last, in even a more happy frame of mind than had been Longfield's before. She had not wittingly told him, but into his mind had flashed her careless words:

“ Bay San Juan.”

That was enough. He sought his room at the club, got out his map and put his finger at once upon it. There! His long adventure was to end at that spot. End in success. And a new adventure was to begin. A never-ending adventure with a woman, a woman who thought him a traitor, yet who had returned his kisses; a woman who had pledged herself to another, yet who had not shrunk from his embrace. Longfield! Sooner than allow her to degrade herself by such an alliance he would kill her, or better Longfield.

It would have been easy to dispose of Longfield, but he decided to let him do his worst, and despite him to carry out his great design single-handed and alone, as he had done before. Let Longfield look to himself. He would thrust himself in Keene's way.

He would have need of all his finesse and trickery to stop Keene now.

Keene went to the window. Dawn was at hand. As he looked out across the square he saw the figure of a man, lurking under the trees, staring at the building. There was something suspicious in his movements. Could it be that some creature of Longfield's was spying upon him? Had Longfield acted already?

Keene changed his clothes quickly. His bag was already packed. He had intended to leave for the North by the morning train. He would go now. The streets were empty when he set forth. The city was not yet awake. That made it more difficult for the man to follow him, undetected. Keene, realizing how close his pursuer was, turned a corner, waited, confronted him, struck him down before he could jump back or voice a cry.

He watched him roll senseless in the gutter. When Keene struck, he struck hard. That was his precept, or any rate his practice. Miss Le Moyne could bear testimony to that, even in the matter of kisses. Longfield would also be in position to give evidence—as to his striking force, not kisses—later. So his thoughts ran, as he rapidly disappeared down the quiet street. His heart throbbed with exultation. He was on the trail at last. The past would not be wasted. That across-the-world dash would not be in

vain. His soul sang as he marched along—the white treasure, the white woman, his beloved land! He loved them all. God, it was great to be alive, to love, to fight, to succeed! If only young Seymour had been with him his cup of joy would have run over.

It was not yet ten o'clock in the morning when Longfield presented himself at Barbara Le Moyne's house and demanded to see her. She had gone to bed, after the exciting episodes of the earlier and later night, and toward dawn had fallen into a deep sleep, from which her maid had difficulty in arousing her at Longfield's peremptory insistence. He would not be denied and Barbara recognized his right. Indeed, she was eager to see him again. And not because she loved him, for she feared—or was it hoped?—that she did not love him, that she never had loved him and never could love him. The balance she intended to hold so evenly had already begun to decline.

She dressed rapidly and soon swept down upon Longfield in some exquisitely becoming morning gown. He kissed her hand—a habit that was becoming distasteful to her, especially as she would make comparisons!—and led her into the morning room and closed the door. He did not mince matters, the exigency was too great.

“Keene!” he began. “I've lost him. I had him

shadowed. He knocked down my man and got away. Do you know anything of him? "

She nodded. Concealment was not in her blood any more than cowardice.

"He was here," she said, with that bold frankness, which so became her and which ordinarily he liked, but which he now found strangely irritating.

"Here! This morning? But you were not up! "

"Last night! "

"Last night! After I left? "

"Yes. "

"In this house? Impossible! " he went on angrily, overreaching himself in his surprise.

She did not like his tone, his manner. Yet it was no rougher or more peremptory than Keene's had been, not so much so in fact. He was losing control of himself in his jealousy, anger, disappointment, and surprise. Her next words did not tend to restore his equilibrium.

"Not in the house, in the garden," she said, coolly.

He stared at her, amazed. By a violent effort he got back some, at least, of his self-control and spoke more gently, as if remonstrating.

"And you were alone with him, at night, in the garden, at that hour! You permitted — my affianced wife — "

"Not yet," she said, quickly — Keene's words she recalled again!

“ You had speech with him. What did he say, what did he want, did he admit, did you tell him? ”

“ I told him that you said he was a traitor and sought to betray his country to Germany. ”

“ Ah — anything else? ”

“ Nothing. ”

“ Did he deny that charge? ”

“ He did not. ”

“ What, no resentment, no —— ”

“ Plenty. ”

“ And he accused me — me, I suppose. ”

“ He said but little of you, Mr. Longfield, but it was easy to divine his feelings. ”

He winced at that, but did not pursue the subject, he changed the attack.

“ Did he tell you where he hid the —— ”

He stopped, but she promptly finished his sentence for him.

“ The platinum? ” she added. “ No, he does not know. I could have told him. ”

“ But you did not? ”

“ No. ”

“ But you will tell me? ”

“ No. ”

“ Why not? ”

“ I could not help him, I would not help you, ” was her maddening answer.

He stamped his feet in impotent rage, despite his

effort to restrain himself. And she enjoyed the whole situation amazingly. If this man now had dared to kiss her, unbidden, she might have killed him. Her glance fell upon the bright blade of the unsheathed kris on the desk! She looked at it and wondered what she should do if—— But Longfield did nothing to make such action necessary.

“He is an enemy,” he protested, after a while, clenching his hands, and speaking harshly and hatefully through his teeth. “I must know where he has gone, and where he has concealed the platinum. If you can help me and don’t, you will be as guilty as he. The Secret Service——”

“I know nothing as to that,” she answered, maintaining her ground. “I told him that when his villainy and treachery had been exposed and prevented and he was punished for it, I had agreed to marry you.”

“And what did he say to that?”

“He agreed. He said, if he were what you said he was, he deserved to lose—me and the treasure.”

“Lose you! Is he mad? Does he dare to——”

“He says he loves me and upon my soul I believe he does.”

“And you are waiting for him, too?”

“For one of you.”

“Which one?”

“That depends on—” but he did not let her finish, he knew the end of the sentence.

“Good! When I come to you with the proof of his treachery in my hand?”

“Then I will add my hand to it.”

Perhaps she would never have made so bold an avowal if, with every passing moment, she had not become more and more convinced of the entire innocence of Keene, however black might, nay must, be the case the Secret Service, as represented by Longfield, had piled up against him.

She had never seen Longfield so agitated and so angry. She had not believed it possible that he could give way to such violent emotion. She had, for the moment, forgot that betraying envenomed glance she had caught in the mirror the night before. She liked him less than ever before. Like him? When she compared him with Keene she almost detested him. She carefully drew away from him. One madman had taken her in his arms and kissed her. She would not suffer another to attempt it—for his own sake, not hers, she told herself with another glance at the curved blade. He burst out furiously:

“I thought before that I fought Keene for the greatest of all stakes. I was mistaken. You are thrown into the balance. Platinum and woman. I mean to have them both. Let him look to it. Good-bye.”

CHAPTER XVII

HOW KEENE FOUND THE HIDING PLACE HE HAD FORGOT

BY THE time Longfield took up the pursuit Keene was well on his way to Bay San Juan. The engineer had rented a swift automobile and by its means had been enabled to catch the early morning newspaper express at a station far up the line. He had succeeded in concealing his movements perfectly. Longfield, however, was not worried by his disappearance. He was sure that Keene would remember where he had concealed the platinum and he supposed that his delay in disposing of it had risen from some difficulty in the negotiations.

At any rate the discoveries of the past few hours would precipitate matters and Longfield had no doubt that if he could get to the place whence the woman had witnessed the fight he would there find Keene and the treasure. Barbara Le Moyne had not told him where that place was, but he knew where he had met her and she was, he reasoned, a person of sufficient importance for him easily to find where she had camped and possibly Sheriff Dempsey or some of the men who had guided or otherwise

served her. With that knowledge the rest would be easy.

He summoned half a dozen trusted assistants, gave them explicit instructions, and they all boarded the same train that afternoon. They were suitably disguised, of course; they got on the train separately, they carefully refrained from recognizing one another on the journey and they debarked at stations before and after the one nearest that for Bay San Juan, in two distinct groups. Their movements, by Longfield's direction, were exceedingly circumspect. One never could tell what suspicions might have been aroused or who would follow them. Longfield, in view of the emergency, had ventured upon the risky act of chartering a special engine and car and preceded them up the line, after he had sent some important wires, one to a certain sequestered harbor not far away where a fast motor boat equipped for a long run lay waiting orders.

When his men arrived at the rendezvous they found Longfield awaiting them with weapons, two automobiles, and Dempsey, the deputy sheriff, whose service he had promptly enlisted. He had easily learned that Dempsey had been the leader of Miss Le Moyne's party. He remembered meeting him the day of his absurd arrest by Barbara Le Moyne. The deputy sheriff had heard Barbara's account and had joined in the search for the missing Keene, on that

day of battle. With lapse of time he had come more and more to believe it had never happened, despite the material evidence which had been as difficult to explain away as it had been to solve the mystery. But Longfield's account made it all plain. Whereat Dempsey was glad. His failure had rankled a bit.

Longfield told Dempsey that he was an agent of the United States Secret Service, exhibiting papers that appeared to substantiate his claim, that he was on the trail of a dangerous enemy of the government—the man who had fought and killed the Malays, harmless, inoffensive barbarians, because he feared they might betray his secret—a traitor and a German sympathizer in fact; and he asked him, as an officer of the law, to assist in thwarting the plan and capturing the person of this man. He knew where he could be found. If Dempsey would show him the place of the battle he would show Dempsey the man. He declared that he would swear out a warrant against him for the murder of the poor Malays and the rest would be easy.

He so inflamed the mind of the honest and worthy, if not very bright official, that Dempsey was ready for anything. He offered to organize a posse, but Longfield declared that was not necessary, as he had available certain deputies of his own, whom he had brought with him. Their preparations took some time, but when they were completed, Dempsey, armed

with his warrant, guided them to the place of Barbara's camp, which they reached late at night. He offered at once to lead them to the place of the encounter, which was several miles away.

Now Longfield had also discovered from the station agent that Keene had preceded him, that he had inquired the way to Bay San Juan, that he had purchased a few supplies, and had ridden off alone that morning on a horse, that he had hired from the local livery stable.

Longfield knew, from the German agents in Siberia, that Keene had brought off and concealed over six thousand pounds of the precious metal. He could not carry it alone. He could not even get it ready for transportation by others in a day; therefore, Longfield decided to wait until morning before seeking further. Keene could not have chartered a boat, and even if he were able to secure help, he would have to come back to the railroad by way of their camp, which was pitched near the trail, or road, so that it would be impossible for him to escape. Carefully apportioning the watches for the night, therefore, Longfield and Dempsey turned in and went to sleep.

Longfield was confident that the next day would see the end of Keene and the beginning of the end of Barbara Le Moyne, though he did not put it exactly in that way. Before he started into the woods he

had telegraphed further orders to the concealed motor boat to meet him, reporting its arrival at the nearest port to Bay San Juan railway station. They could take the treasure to the Mexican schooner, cruising off the coast to the southward, in that boat. The cards were all in his own hand; if he played them with only decent skill he could not lose — and he was a master player.

Keene did just what Longfield had conjectured he would. He went on alone to find out first, before doing anything else. He had no idea that Longfield was in the vicinity. He did not, for a moment, believe the woman would give Longfield any clue. He felt perfectly safe. He had not learned that Longfield had met her in the North Woods shortly after the battle, and that it would be easy for him to find Keene.

It was with the strangest emotion that Keene drew rein on the little plateau where she had come to his assistance. It well indicates his feelings that he thus, at first, identified it, rather than by the battle he had fought or the treasure it had concealed. She had become the dominant fact of life. As he surveyed the clearing it all came back to him. There he had stood when Po-Yan-Pen had made that first furious lunge. There he had grappled with Wan-Aman. Over that cliff he had thrown him. He stepped to the edge and peered down.

A tree, growing far below him near the water's edge, had been uprooted in some autumn storm. Below, amid its roots, he saw a skeleton, or parts of it, of one of the Malays — Po-Yan-Pen himself, or Wan-Aman, possibly — which had lodged there and had been hidden by the trees. Held there by the roots it had not gone out to the sea with the rest. If the old tree had not blown down, the remains might have remained concealed until they moldered away. Some of the bright cloth of the jacket, a part of the shining sarong, a faded headkerchief, caught on the branches, held what was left together and told their tragic tale. He turned away to pleasanter things, wondering if, by any chance, those Malays, or Po-Yan-Pen, the leader, had been in German pay.

Here he had fallen only to awake in her arms, so white against the heavenly blue above him. There, under that tree, she had dragged him before she left him. He recalled how he had looked and listened. Down that hill he had crawled to the boat. Upon that azure sea he had been borne away.

As he stared seaward he gave a thought to young Seymour, who had shared all his dangers, who had backed him up with youthful energy and enthusiasm in the long journey from Baku to within a few days' sail of that bay and shallow river below him. If it had not been for the devoted comradeship and loyal support of Seymour, scarcely more than a boy, even

he could not have surmounted all the dangers. In keeping watch over white men and brown men and yellow men, strangers all, they had divided the time.

If Seymour had not been treacherously done for at last at the imminent close of the long voyage across the Pacific, in sight of the goal or almost, with success practically within their grasp, Po-Yan-Pen would never have dared to attack Keene. He would never have met Barbara. Young Seymour's life seemed to be another of those wondrous ties that bound the man and the woman together. And now he slept peacefully beneath the ever-moving waves of the great deep beyond the far horizon.

Longfield? Keene lifted his head and laughed at the thought of him, not mirthfully, but in scorn. As he did so his eyes fell upon the open crest of the overlooking hill not far away—far out of earshot, he noticed as he remembered how she said she had called to warn him and in vain. She must have stood there. He stared up at it and laughed again, but differently, this time in sheer gladness of heart. He would go up there later. He would stand where she had stood. He would kiss the spot her feet had hal-
lowed.

A traitor, he? His brow clouded at the accusation. He had brought that platinum across the world for the United States. Why had he hidden it? For safety, its safety and his own. He knew that he had

been under surveillance, that German spies were everywhere, that he had escaped a thousand dangers narrowly, that it was one thing to bring the platinum to the land and another to deliver it to the government, unimpeded. Fate had driven him into this desolate bay, to this lonely shore. He had been compelled to conceal it, till he met some responsible agent of the government with whom to arrange for its reception.

Besides, he wished the pleasure of giving it in his own way. He had no bargains to make with his country—oh, no. The government could have it for whatever it chose to pay toward the expense of bringing it overseas, or for nothing, after he had led its agents to the place of concealment and had said, “There it is, take it.” Of course, now that Seymour was dead, he felt morally bound to see that his comrade’s old and dependent mother, back East, got something out of it for her future living. But that would be easy. He, himself, scorned to profiteer.

So, for himself, he did not care. To do the thing was reward enough. At least he had not cared until he discovered he loved Barbara Le Moyne. She was rich, not fabulously so, but sufficiently so for luxurious independence. He would have liked to match fortunes with her before seeking her hand. As it was he was almost at the end of his resources. He had spent his money freely, the savings of years, in that

dash from Russia to California, and now it was practically all gone — the diamond was the last. He had seen it on Longfield's finger, at the dinner, and had longed to tear it from him.

But, what did money matter? What would anything matter? If she loved him, as he determined she should, she would be as superbly indifferent to any such consideration as he was. Love was all. Let her give him that and for interest on the obligation he would return her the world and the treasure thereof. With her he could do anything.

His memory returned to him completely now. He plunged into the forest path, penetrated its deep recesses unerringly, marveling that he had ever forgot, until he stopped before the vine-covered mouth of the cave, or niche in the rocks, which he had chanced upon and where he had concealed his treasure. With hands that did tremble a little he quickly lifted the vines so as not to break the screen, moved the earth, cleared away the débris and peered within.

It was there!

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH MR. STEVENS INTERVIEWED A WOMAN AND FOR-
GOT HER

NOW, all secrecy had come to an end, so far as the three principal persons—for so they fancied themselves to be—were concerned. Keene knew that Longfield would ultimately be after him and the treasure—was, indeed, already seeking him. Longfield knew that Keene realized that fact. Barbara Le Moyne knew that there was open warfare between the two, that a battle beside which Keene's struggle with the Malays, desperate as that had been, or any of the affairs in which chance allusions had told her Longfield had been engaged, would be as child's play. And certainly, one of the two was a traitor, unless both were mistaken, which was unlikely.

And back of their contention were the three greatest motives which can influence man: love of money, love of country, love of woman. The category needs qualification or explanation in each member.

Love of money? Barbara did both men full justice there. She knew it was not the intrinsic value

of the rare and costly platinum for which they cared. A less intuitive perception would not have drawn the nice distinction, but she knew that the white metal was simply a means to an end and the end was the second member of the series.

Love of country? If one were traitor, the other were patriot indubitably. That platinum, value of which she recalled vaguely, was evidently necessary to military preparedness, to the making of something, some lethal weapon, or machinery which without it could not function.

The only qualification for the last guerdon of high endeavor was a distinguishing particle, *a* woman, or better, *the* woman, and that was she. Love of one woman!

She would not have been *a* woman, or *the* woman, had she not thrilled to that consideration. She had always loved her independence, suddenly it seemed to have been taken from her. She had become a stake in a great game. All her volition was simply expressed in her willingness to abide the issue. Was she willing? Could any woman so detach herself that she could be absolutely neutral in such a battle? Certainly Barbara Le Moyne could not, and after a time she gave over even the pretense that she was.

The more she thought of Longfield the less willing would she be to pay the stake, if he won; and, the more she thought of Keene, the more anxious she

grew that he might win the contest—and herself. Indeed, so swiftly and so strongly did her obsession grow, so intensified became her conviction that she was for Keene, not Longfield, that she would have eliminated herself as a reward of victory by turning openly to the one and from the other, had not two things prevented her from announcing her change of purpose to the combatants.

First of all, she could not tell them both the truth—or even tell Longfield, and leave it to Keene to find out for himself—for they were no longer there. Although Longfield had lost track of him, Barbara knew that Keene had gone to the North Woods. She had a feeling, that in some way, in that mysterious midnight conversation in the garden, she had betrayed the name of the bay and the river, where she had taken him in her arms.

Her conscience did not accuse her, because if so, she had done it unwittingly. To tell the truth, she was not sure what she had said. Her most distinct remembrance was not of her own words. When her thoughts turned to that mystic hour—as they did again and again—it was to feel herself swept again with a roughness she had not found unpleasing into his arms. When he had kissed her riotously, bewildered and confused but not resentful, she had returned his kisses and had not shrunk from that passionate embrace.

Flushes of shame alternated with quivers of joy in her soul. Not for anything would she have allowed or encouraged or participated in such an interchange if she had been given a moment's warning, if she had been her usual self, if she had not taken off the armor of convention with her party gown, if she had not been alone with him in the garden before the coming of the dawn, with the moon's rays filtering down through the leaves of the over-arching trees, with the scent and fragrance of the tropic blossoms and all the glamour of the night upon her. It had been a moment of madness. Puck had been abroad and had touched her with his madcap wand.

She was in no way unhappy, however; it never occurred to her that Keene would think any the less of her because she had yielded. Heart may speak to heart in language untranslatable into the customary speech of convention and yet be fully understood. He had kissed her! When would he kiss her again? Longfield! She found herself rubbing her hand, like the queen in the play, as if there were blood upon it, profanation in his touch. He, at least, should not have even that privilege any more.

The second consideration that kept her from renouncing her impartiality and abandoning her neutrality, was the more powerful of the two. Like every other woman, she would fain be won—taken by force like the kingdom of heaven by the violent—

rather than fall like ripe fruit to the hand of him who shook the tree. To give was better than to receive in spiritual matters, but with women, as it had been in the past, it was better to be taken than to be given. Were the Sabine women really heart-broken for all they fought their captors? Which means that Barbara Le Moyne was entirely confident that, in the struggle, Keene would succeed and Longfield would fail, so she could maintain the rôle into which they had thrust her, and which, in the excitement and glamour of the moment, she had accepted without fear or hesitation, with no feeling of anxiety, lest she would be compelled to back out of her bargain at the last moment because the wrong man made the final claim.

In fact, so confident was she, that she never stopped to consider her course, in the event that Longfield got the decision. He could not. She was not sure who, or what Longfield was. She wished Keene had told her, although she admired him the more because he had not. At the best Longfield might be mistaken. At the worst— But what was the use of discussing the worst or the best of Longfield with her heart. She did not, she could not love him, or give herself to him. She looked at her hand and shuddered. She sat silent and recollected and her lips trembled. If either were traitor it could not be Keene.

The men were evenly enough matched, she decided. What Longfield lacked of the brute force of Keene, which was not altogether brutal, he made up in finesse. One thing would turn the scale, she herself must be thrown into the balance. She had already determined to go to the North Woods. Weighted with her love — she dared to use the word — the scale would depend in favor of the bolder man, who had kissed her lips and not her hand. Longfield should be hoisted in the air by his own petard. Was she to be the determining explosive, came the whimsical interrogation? She would telegraph Dempsey that she was taking the night train. With his aid she would settle the affair and in accordance with her heart.

Her maid was already busy with the preparations necessary to the sudden journey when she was informed that a certain Mr. Stevens would like to see her, immediately, on business of the most pressing importance. Barbara was not used to being summoned in that way. She questioned the servant, who brought the message as to the personality which had dictated it.

“He’s a very gentlemanly person, Miss Le Moyne, soft spoken and polite but —” the servant hesitated for a word, “if I might presume to advise you, ma’am, I should think it was better to see him. He’s got a — a way with him.”

Barbara nodded and forthwith made her way to the reception room.

Now Mr. Stevens was all that the maid had said, quiet, gentle, unobtrusive, well mannered, although he did not give the impression of any particular social grace. Yes, Barbara found him distinctly likable upon inspection, and the more she conversed with him the more that impression was strengthened. Despite the fact that she had missed the mark with Longfield, Barbara was no mean judge of men, especially if they did not make love to her; that is always a little confusing and bewildering to the judgment of women. She decided that this was a man of action, that in an emergency he could be as hard and true as tempered steel. As a matter of fact her intuition was warranted.

If she could have seen Mr. Stevens, who had admirably enacted the humble, if important, rôle of waiter at a certain little dinner in New York not long before, hanging on to a window ledge, twenty stories from the ground, in order to overhear and circumvent a conspiracy, which he had discovered, she would have been more sure of him than ever. But she did not need that testimony and she did not know it. Mr. Stevens did not allude to it, he did not discuss himself at all. He introduced a fourth element in the eternal triangle, himself—not, however, to make it an eternal quadrilateral—by no means.

That consideration came to her later in her berth in the sleeping car. How strange it would have been if she had met him before and he had also fallen in love with her!

Mr. Stevens had been in San Francisco for some time, it appeared. He had easily located the two men. Finally, with that acumen born of long experience, and a wide knowledge of men, and not a little of women, he had decided that the key to the situation was in her hands. He had worked alone without communicating with the local authorities and having come to this wise conclusion he had come directly to her.

Unfortunately, even the most acute are not omniscient; he was just a day too late for immediate action; not too late, however, for ultimate triumph, he hoped.

Mr. Stevens proved to be a singularly secretive man. He told her little of his plan or purpose, or even of his hopes. He showed her abundant evidence, however, entirely to establish himself in her good graces, and revealed just enough of his desires to make her eager to help him. When he asked her questions, afterward, she answered fully and gladly, withholding nothing. He was very well satisfied with what he learned, apparently, for he thanked her warmly as he turned to go. She was mystified and a little hurt at his obvious reluctance to give her his

complete confidence, so before he passed through the door, she hurled this verbal bomb at him:

“Mr. Longfield told me that he, too, was in the secret service of his government. I think he must have gone to Bay San Juan. If you find him, I have no doubt, you can count upon his invaluable assistance also.”

She remembered afterward how the man's face had changed as he stood listening to her parting words. Her expression was innocence itself. It blinded for the moment even the keen eyes of the man. His lips straightened under the sudden compression of his jaws, his eyes flashed. But, when he spoke, it was in the same smooth, easy, pleasant, even gentle way she had noted.

“Quite so. He told you that, did he? Well, it's quite true. On government service—and secretly. I should dearly love to meet him, and I expect to.”

His words filled her with sudden dismay. “Quite true!—on government service and secretly!” It could not be. Mr. Stevens obviously did not know everything. For in what position did his statement about Longfield place Keene? She could not let the man go without further inquiry. With a rising color, a heaving breast, a quiver of excitement in her voice, all of which Mr. Stevens carefully noted, she stopped him again in the doorway.

“I've told you everything,” she began.

“Yes, and you will not find me ungrateful,” he answered.

“Then, tell me one thing in return?”

“If it does not run counter to my duty.”

“Do you think Mr. Keene is an enemy, a traitor, as Mr. Longfield asserts?”

“Dear Miss Le Moyne, I rarely give opinions. It’s dangerous in my work.”

“You mean?”

“Evidence is the only thing that counts, without it one is so apt to be—ah—mistaken.”

Her face lighted. She could not help it. He stared at her, his eyes twinkling, and there was something in his glance that gave her hope. He knew it was there. He smiled suddenly.

“Pardon me the liberty,” he said, gently turning through the open doorway, and this time finally, “but for your sake, I hope not.”

And with that somewhat enigmatical remark he was gone. What did he mean? He had smiled as he vanished from her sight. Somehow she took comfort from the fact. And she needed all the comfort available, for she could not escape the conviction that she was not playing quite fairly, despite her promise. It was not in woman’s power to do that, she said to herself, in extenuation. Meanwhile, she had something to do herself, she was more resolved than ever upon her course—fair or not. She rose and called

her maid to her and then drew a telegram blank from her desk and began to write.

She had not mentioned her plan to Mr. Stevens and with all his shrewdness he had not divined it. He could have stopped her with a word, which, if necessary, he could have backed by an order which, even she would be bound to observe, if he had suspected what she was about to do. As a matter of fact, having got from her the exact information he wanted, and having found out exactly how the land lay, he dismissed her from his consideration, which was a dangerous thing to do. No man could safely dismiss a woman like Barbara Le Moyne from his consideration in any enterprise in which she had any interest. And in this case even her shrewd interlocutor did not divine how deeply she was engaged. Well, the mistake he made turned out, in the end, to his advantage, although when he first realized his oversight he was filled with dismay.

CHAPTER XIX

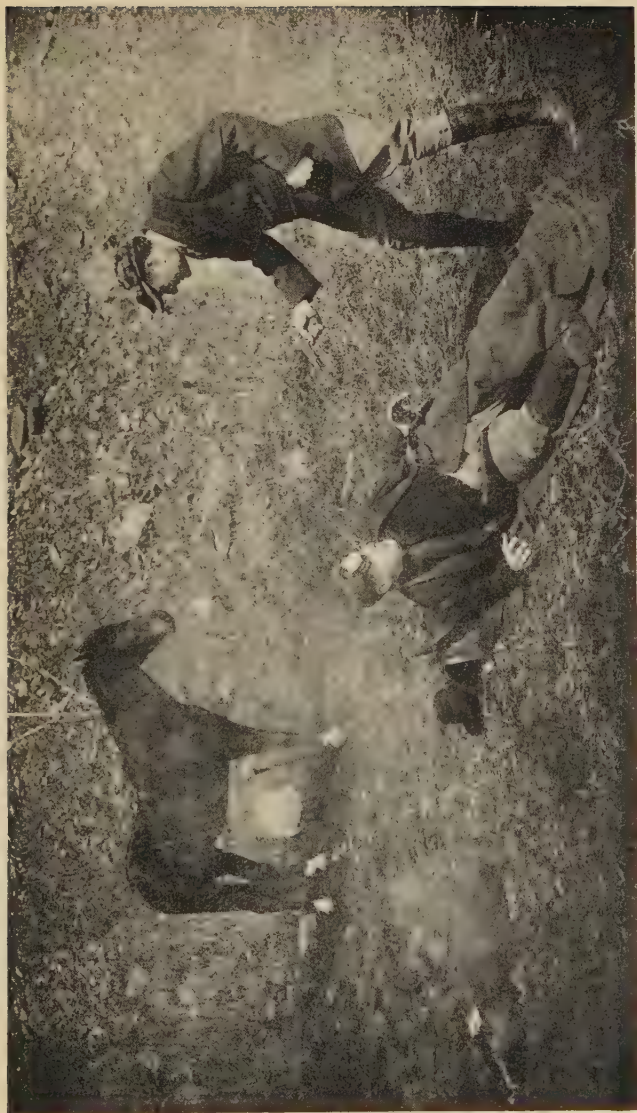
HOW BARBARA LE MOYNE LOOKED AGAIN ON A FIELD OF BATTLE

THERE must have been some fatality about the place where Keene spent the night, that little open plateau by the cliff overlooking the river, where he had fought and conquered the Malays, and where she had come to his assistance and, by binding up his wounds and giving him drink, had saved his life. For, when he opened his eyes in the morning, it was not to stare at any savage band, not to gaze into a woman's face, but to see Longfield, who had, indeed, kicked him roughly out of sleep and now stood over him, gun in hand; quite as savage as the Malays he looked, too, despite his sneering smile of triumph undisguised.

“Get up. Got you at last, damn you,” he said, harshly.

Keene, covered by the pistol, could only obey. Without a word he arose; slowly got on one knee and then with a scientific football tackle, as vigorous as it was sudden, he bowled Longfield over like a stricken tenpin.

As Longfield went down, for the tackle was clean



"Get up. Got you at last, damn you!"

and low and hard, as Keene had been taught to make it in his college days, his pistol went off harmlessly, and he called loudly for help. He was no mean antagonist for an ordinary man, but Keene was several years younger and as hard as nails. He had completely recovered from his wasting experiences. Longfield was a bit soft, and the life he had led had not been so clean. The two battling desperately, rolled over and over in the clearing, but youth was finally served. Longfield lay panting and exhausted at the mercy of his conqueror. Now, as he knelt upon him, his hand on his enemy's throat, Keene was at a loss what to do with him.

He disarmed him, of course, and having possessed himself of both weapons, Longfield's and his own, he rose to his feet and allowed the man he had just mastered to sit up and then to rise.

"You nearly had me that time," he said coolly; "but it takes more than one German blackguard to get me."

"What do you mean?" roared Longfield, furiously.

"I mean what I say. You're one of the brutal, blood-thirsty, sneaking gang of scoundrels that's been hounding me since I left Baku. I thought I'd shaken them all off, but you're worse than all the others."

"I am in the Secret Service," said Longfield,

quickly, thinking to carry out his bluff. "I can prove it."

"Doubtless, but of Germany."

"Lies, lies!" protested the man.

"Truth!" said the American, imperturbably. "I suspected it at the club. The way you looked at that poor mess boy, the way you pronounced certain vowels, the mouthings you give way to in all your speech. You can't help betraying yourself, you almost said *Haus-frau* the other night. You actually went away from that dinner party humming *Heiden-Röslein*! I followed you to the closed saloon of one of the most notorious enemy aliens on the coast. I intend to give you up as soon as I've delivered the platinum to the government. That's what you are after, I suppose."

"That and the woman," returned Longfield, insolently.

"You'll never get either."

"I mean to have both."

Longfield had his back to the bay and river toward which Keene's face was turned. Longfield, who had got up before the others that morning and had gone to the overlooking hill, had seen Keene below him, under the trees, still asleep. He could not resist the temptation to take him alone and single-handed. Although his attempt had resulted so disastrously he knew that his men, under Dempsey's guidance, would

soon find him. Indeed, he saw them even then, creeping through the trees toward him. They saw what had happened. Their principal had been captured. They would turn the tables. They came cautiously, as befitted men about to attack so desperate and resourceful a criminal and traitor. They must not make any mistake.

Therefore, Longfield loudly and ostentatiously backed up his insolent rejoinder by bitter words, finally leaping at Keene, despite the other man's gun. He carefully timed his attack, so as to engage Keene's attention at the critical moment. The struggle, as Longfield had foreseen, was a brief one. Before Keene's superior strength and skill could be used advantageously, Dempsey and the six accomplices of Longfield had seized him, disarmed him, and freed Longfield. The latter was first to speak.

"Sheriff!" he exclaimed in triumph, "I accuse this man of the murder of certain harmless and inoffensive Malays, one in particular named Po-Yan-Pen. This is his dagger," he continued, lifting the weapon he had stolen from Barbara Le Moyne's desk, unnoticed by her, two days before.

"I've seed that afore," nodded Dempsey.

"And there below you is all that remains of the body of the poor man," continued Longfield, who had caught a glimpse of the hideous thing, tangled up in the fallen tree by the water's edge.

“Stranger,” began the old deputy sheriff, grimly, laying his hand on Keene’s shoulder, “I guess you’re caught with the goods on. It’ll be jail for you for the present.”

“And I further accuse him of being a traitor to the United States Government in bringing into this country and concealing hereabouts a quantity of platinum with intent to sell it to Germany,” hurried on Longfield, in relentless triumph, before Keene could enter a protest.

Fortune had dealt him a good hand, he held all the cards, he would be a fool, indeed, did he fail to play them to the limit.

“Don’t know much about that ’ere plat’num stuff,” said the deputy sheriff, easily. “Murder’s enough. It’s a hangin’ matter hereabouts, sometimes a trial’s made unnecessary,” he added, gloomily. “The boys frequent takes matters in their own hands. They’re apt to git on the job any old time—unless I objects, an’ I ain’t none too anxious to per-teck a traitor, which I hates the breed.”

“Exactly,” said Longfield. He turned to Keene. “You see?” he asked.

“You damned, infernal scoundrel—” hotly began the other.

Then he mastered his anger and kept himself well in hand. He realized that only his wits could save him—and the platinum—now. He even felt a

passing admiration for Longfield, so skilfully had he played the game. As Longfield laughed, scornfully, not indifferent to, but actually pleased at his prisoner's abuse, Keene turned to Dempsey.

"Who are you?" he demanded, "and what are you doing butting into this game?"

"My name's Dempsey. I'm a depity sheriff for this country, an' I butts in whenever in my jedgment it's necessary."

"Have you a warrant for my arrest?"

"This yere is warrant enough, I reckon," said Dempsey, easily, tapping the pistol that hung at his side. "But we got a paper one, all reg'lar, too."

"Dempsey," returned Keene, coolly, "you're making the mistake of your life in arresting me. I'm neither a murderer nor a traitor. That man, yonder, is both, and a German to boot."

"The court an' the jury'll have to settle that," answered Dempsey, a little uncertainly, for Keene's confident bearing, no less than his assured words, were not without effect on the old frontiersman.

"There's the liar, the traitor," went on Keene, dispassionately, seeing the impression he had made and striving to strengthen it. He was mad all through, but he perceived that he must not give way to his passionate resentment, if he was to win the cool old deputy sheriff. "I accuse him of being a

German spy. Longfield! I'll bet my life against a nickel his name is Langfeld."

"Von Langfeld, Colonel in the Imperial German Army, on special service, if you please," interposed the other boldly.

"There!" exclaimed Keene, instantly. "Look Sheriff, how the others are closing about you. Quick. My God! They've got the drop on you already."

"He said he was in the secret service of the government," began Dempsey, more uncertainly than ever. "He showed papers, proofs," he continued, looking at the others and realizing that he was indeed helpless.

"And so I am, but of the German Government, you old fool," asserted Longfield, or von Langfeld, to give him his proper name.

"Hell!" exclaimed Dempsey, instinctively, reaching for his gun, despite the fact that he was covered by six weapons.

Before he could draw it the others seized him. And before they finished the struggle both men were bound and helpless. The odds were too great against them, especially as von Langfeld took an active hand in the battle that ensued.

"Now," said von Langfeld, when they were bound and helpless, "you've led us a long chase and given us a hard fight, Keene, you swine. But we're at the end of the road now. You, and this damn fool here,

have but a few minutes to live, unless you do just what I say, and do it quick."

All the veneer of civilization fell from him and he stood revealed for what he was, a German as brutal, as ruthless, as determined, as any that ever fired a Belgian town, or bayoneted an innocent child, or crucified a wounded soldier, or raped a helpless woman. Both prisoners recognized his quality instantly. He kicked them both as they lay bound at his feet.

"Stranger," said old Dempsey, calmly, "that German dog called the turn for me correct enough. I axes your pardon for bein' sech a damn fool. I reckon here's where we cashes in."

"Yes, you do, unless——"

Von Langfeld paused and looked at the two men bound at his feet.

"Unless wot?" asked Dempsey, Keene disdaining to speak, knowing well that neither he nor any other man of honor could accept any proposition, this or any other German in the war would make.

"Unless Keene tells me where he hid the platinum and confesses in writing that he is a traitor to his country."

"And why do you wish such a false confession?" asked Keene, more to gain time than anything else—though how time would serve him he could not see.

"To show it to Miss Le Moyne," answered von Langfeld.

"Miss Le Moyne! Miss Babby Le Moyne!" broke in old Dempsey, surprised beyond measure. "What in hell has she got to do with you an' him?"

"What is that to you?" answered von Langfeld. But he added an explanation because he thought he could add to Keene's trouble by doing so. "She's the lady I am going to marry, if you must know, so soon as I settle with this hound here."

"I'm a kind of a gardeen to that girl. I've knowed her sence she was a kid. She ain't goin' to marry no damn scoundrel like you. She's got too much sense. She took you for a murderer when she first seen you, an', by God, she was right!"

"Shut up," roared von Langfeld, kicking him again and then menacing the old man with his gun. "You won't be here to see or know what she does when we've finished with you," he snarled, baring his teeth like an animal.

"Won't I? Well, wot's the answer, stranger?" continued the sheriff, looking at his fellow-prisoner, and utterly disdaining von Langfeld, his violence and his threats.

"What would your reply be?" asked Keene in turn, smiling a little. "And, by the way, I am in love with her, too."

"See him damned first. Hope you gits her."

“Exactly. We are agreed, you—Hun,” said the engineer, looking up at the German, all his contempt in his voice and word.

Von Langfeld, swearing savagely in resentment of that loathed and hated term, reached down and struck Keene heavily across the mouth with his open palm, not once, but again and again.

When Barbara Le Moyne descended from the sleeping car at Bay San Juan station that morning, and confronted the quiet little man with whom she had conversed the day before, and who had come north on the same train, it would be hard to see how Mr. Stevens could be more astonished, or show his surprise and dismay the more openly—and he was not given to betraying his feelings, very far from it, indeed. The two stared at each other until the man broke the silence.

“Miss Le Moyne, what are you doing here?” he asked, severely. “This is no game for a woman.”

“Not when she is the stake?”

“Ah, I see.”

“And now that I am here, I mean to help—” she paused.

“Who?”

“You.”

“Good,” said the little man, who had shrewdly appraised her. “This war has taught us that our

women are to be depended upon absolutely. I have learned that the man—the men—I am after, came here.”

“Mr. Keene? Mr. Longfield?”

“Certainly, and others, perhaps. Now I want to get to the place where you saw the battle you told me of. And if I can get a fearless, loyal man to guide me and perhaps help me, so much the better.”

“I can guide you myself. I know every foot of the way.”

“You could be of no help in——”

“Could I not? Try me,” she pleaded.

“I will,” he said, simply, after a long look of appraisal, which ended in admiration. She stood so erect, so determined, so splendid, so capable before him—and so beautiful he might have added, if he had been given to the language of compliment and had been more susceptible to woman’s charming appeal. “Let us get some horses and go. Are you ready? Speed is imperative.”

“I’ll be ready when the horses are, Mr. Stevens,” she answered, turning toward the rude hotel across from the station. “If you can get hold of a man named Dempsey, tell him Miss Le Moyne wants him.”

As they mounted the horses the man told her that Dempsey’s taciturn wife had said that he had gone away the day before with a Mr. Longfield, into the wilderness, no one knew where. It was a blow to

her. She had counted on the loyal and efficient aid of the devoted old man. But there was no help for it. When they two found Longfield and Keene she could count upon Dempsey's full support so soon as he recognized her. She had not the least idea what had happened. But she was rather glad on the whole that Dempsey was with Longfield, for she was sure that he would see fair play and that no harm would come to any prisoner in his charge, supposing Keene to be a prisoner. So Barbara and Mr. Stevens took the trail together. Whatever was to be done they two must serve for the doing of it. There were few men left in the village, the war had taken all the younger and more reliable ones.

And that was how and why the woman looking down from the bare hill top, as she had done a few months before, the man accompanying her standing by, saw Keene assaulted a second time. Only now it was no savage, uncivilized Malay, who sought to stab, but Longfield, who struck him, bound and helpless, in the face. Was he more savage than the wild men of the Far East? Beast, she called him in her heart, as her cheeks flushed, her hands clenched and her heart throbbed wildly. Yet, she knew now, beyond peradventure, who was false and who was true. Only a brute, a coward, a German, would strike a bound, helpless man like that.

Keene! Thank God for him!

CHAPTER XX

SHOWS HOW BARBARA LE MOYNE IS BOTH VICTOR AND
VANQUISHED

BUT this time Barbara Le Moyne did not scream as she had done before. She watched Keene reel under the blows, which he could not return, and noted with thankfulness when they finally stopped. She watched the cowardly assailant turn away at last. Thank God, her eyes were opened before it was too late. She could almost rejoice over what she saw, save for his sake. The blow had enlightened her. The truth at last, and with it the full acknowledgment in her heart as to which man she loved. To have found out that would perhaps be worth the insult, to him as well as to her! She looked to the man by her side. He, too, had seen, of course, but he did not seem so much surprised as indignant. His gentleness, his mildness of speech and bearing were gone. He was the very incarnation of relentless hate and scorn. His eyes were bright with determination, there was a look of triumph in his face too. He had run down his quarry. The hunt was over, his prey was there!

“It was to be expected,” he said, in answer to her

surprised look. "German spies behave worse than that as a rule."

"German spies!—is he—oh, thank God," she burst out triumphant, glad for the confirmation, even though she had thrust all doubt out of her heart before.

The little man comprehended instantly what was back of her ejaculations. He smiled.

"Time enough to thank God when we've got them all," was his practical comment.

"And Mr. Keene?"

"I'm not yet altogether sure of him yet, Miss Le Moyne, but it doesn't look as if he stood in with that gang any too well," was his cautious yet reassuring answer. "I guess that blow is pretty good evidence that he's O. K."

She faced him with sudden indignation at the bare possibility, but he stopped her with upraised hand.

"No time for argument whether it's a case of villains falling out or not, we've got to get that scoundrel Longfield. I'm at least sure of him."

"You'll find that Mr. Keene——"

"We've got to release him, too. Now, I had no idea that Longfield had brought a gang with him. I can't wait to assemble a posse. We must deal with the situation ourselves. Look yonder."

He pointed far out to sea and then drew a small three-power glass from his pocket, focused it swiftly

and, after one look, handed it to her. She soon made out a stout motor boat coming up the coast at a rapid rate in the smooth seas.

“He’s planned everything well,” continued Mr. Stevens. “That’ll be his boat. He’s an able scoundrel. They mean to get the——”

“Platinum,” she interposed, as he hesitated.

“How’d you know? No matter. We’ve got to stop ’em now. I wish you were a man.”

“They are seven against two of us,” she answered, swiftly. “We must trick them. And perhaps you’ll find a woman’s wit will serve. Listen.”

Rapidly she outlined her plan. He paid the strictest attention to her hurried words, his face lighting as she unfolded her bold design.

“Good,” he said, “we’ll try it. You are a woman in ten thousand. Few could do it. I’m sure you can. Are you armed?”

For answer she handed him her pistol, a small, but serviceable automatic, which she drew from her jacket pocket. She had dressed herself for riding in that brief interval at the hotel, while he got the horses. She wore just what she had worn before, when she had plunged down the hill to help Keene the first time, just what she had worn when she had tried to arrest Longfield. She wished she had shot him then, she thought passionately, as she recalled that blow in the face her lover had just received.

She threw back her jacket as Mr. Stevens took the pistol and disclosed a small sheath knife at her belt.

“This will be all I need, keep the gun. I’m going to fight with my wits, I’ll leave the shooting to you, this time,” she answered, simply.

“Miss Le Moyne, I take off my hat to you,” said Mr. Stevens, admiringly. “You’re better than a man in this situation. Good luck to you. I’ll do my part, never fear. But, if we succeed, the honor and credit will be yours.”

She nodded to him, thrilling a little that she had won his praise—his commendation was well worth having she had come to believe—and then she mounted and rode down the familiar trail toward the clearing and the two men to whom she meant so much. Stevens watched her until she had disappeared. He waited for a time, as agreed upon, and then leaving his horse, he plunged straight down the hill, afoot, over places prohibitory to a horse, moving more slowly and concealing himself with great caution and greater skill, as he drew near to the open.

“Do you see that fire, Keene?” asked von Langfeld, pointing to a heap of blazing brush his men had piled up at the foot of a tree, and had just lighted. He did not wait for an answer, which would not have been given in any case, but went on. “When it gets a better start we’re going to warm your feet a little

this cold morning to stimulate your recollection of the place where you hid the stuff."

"I know perfectly well where it is now—Hun," said Keene, mockingly.

"Where? Better tell me quick, unless you have a fancy to go lame for the rest of your short life."

"Where you'll never find it—Bosche," continued the other.

Von Langfeld rushed toward him, ferociously, his hand upraised for another blow, his face white with passion; for Keene, who had no hope of rescue, had counted upon a swift end by provoking him to murderous assault; anything being better than the slow torture of fire.

"You should kill the traitor and have done with him," broke in Barbara Le Moyne at that very instant. The German stopped his rush and whirled about, his hand on his pistol, to find her confronting him, having stopped her horse under the trees nearby. "It's only I," she went on, smiling at him as she spoke. "Oh, I'm so glad to find you. The Secret Service men are after—Mr. Keene"—von Langfeld did not notice the pause, nor for that matter did Keene, who was listening as if distraught to this evidence that the woman he loved had decided against him—"I followed you up here to warn you to hurry back with your prisoner. I knew you wanted to have the glory of catching him yourself and now you have

him. Splendid! I congratulate you," she went on, hurriedly.

"Where are those Secret Service men?" asked von Langfeld, looking about him anxiously.

"I don't know. They didn't come with me."

"But you may have been followed. It is most serious," he burst out.

"Nobody followed me," she protested, as if the matter were of no moment. "Come and help me down."

Somewhat reluctantly, for her presence somehow seemed unaccountably threatening, as well as inexplicable despite her quick and specious explanation, he lifted her from her horse and set her on her feet. Keene said nothing. In his heart was a wonder, a despair, a pity too deep for words. She did not look at him. But old Dempsey anxiously intervened. He could not understand her choice and her course any more than Keene could.

"Miss Le Moyne," he began, "Miss Babby, you know me. I'm your chap thing, you remembers, I'm true American all through. That man you're talkin' to is a damn Hun an' a traitor an' a thief an' a liar to boot. He's confessed it. Keene's O. K."

"Nonsense. I thought Mr. Keene was a true American once myself," she said, gravely. "I'm sorry to see you in such bad company, Dempsey."

This was too much for Dempsey. He shut up like a clam while he racked his brains to find some convincing argument or appeal.

“Why don’t we go, Mr. Longfield? Now you’ve got him.”

“The platinum!” he answered, slowly recovering his equilibrium, which her abrupt and unexpected entrance had so disturbed. He began to be glad that she had come. “He won’t tell where it is.”

“Why don’t your men search for it then? It must be hereabouts. They all came down that trail, I remember,” she said, pointing into the forest. “It should be easy to find.”

Keene gritted his teeth together. There was no doubt as to the genuineness of her disbelief in him. She was playing into von Langfeld’s hands in every way. He opened his mouth to protest. And then stopped, appalled at a thought which came to him. Suppose he could convince Barbara Le Moyne that von Langfeld was a villain, in what terrible danger would she not be plunged by that discovery! What might not the German do to her? What had not Germans done to helpless women? He turned to Dempsey, checking him just in time and whispered his thought, whereat the sheriff nodded and also refrained from speech. He, too, could see the danger. If Keene or Dempsey came out of this awful coil alive either could convince her; if they died it would

not matter to them. Yet either would have died gladly to warn her of her peril.

“A good, an excellent idea,” exclaimed von Langfeld. “Two of you watch the prisoners, two of you follow the trail yonder and see where it leads. One of you tend the fire and you”—he pointed at the last—“go down to the river and see if the boat is coming.”

As the men hastened to follow these directions their chief, now fully reassured and beginning to take a genuine Teutonic delight in the torture of prisoners, turned to her.

“You promised me, dear lady, that after I had caught him, you——”

“Yes, I did,” she answered promptly.

“Well, then——”

He made a step toward her. As in sudden timidity or bashfulness, she stepped hastily backwards. She was between him and the two prisoners. Dempsey was seated, reclining against a rock. Keene had got to his feet and was leaning back against the same huge boulder. Both were securely bound as to hands and merely hobbled as to feet. Two disarmed men amid half a dozen enemies did not require extra lashing, it had been thought. They could never release themselves unaided. The two men told off to guard the prisoners were behind von Langfeld. The others were already moving away in different direc-

tions, according to orders. Barbara backed close to Keene, who was nearest her.

“Not now, not before —” she protested with well-simulated reluctance, forcing a smile into which she infused a semblance of coquetry and admiration which quite blinded the mad German, so confident in his own appeal to this splendid woman.

As she spoke she put her hands behind her. Keene was almost blind with rage. What was von Langfeld about to do? Dempsey had no such reason to obscure his vision and cloud his judgment. He saw the flash of a knife in the girl’s hands and he straightened up and touched Keene quickly with his foot, the loose lashing giving him a certain freedom of motion.

Instantly Keene understood. His hands were in front of him, his arms held to his side by his own waist belt, which had been buckled about him. His fingers closed over the knife. And which was the more precious to him, the weapon or the knowledge that she knew the truth, he could scarcely say.

She smiled again at von Langfeld as she released the knife. The big German thought the smile was for him. He drew from his finger the great diamond. He held it up a second and, stepping forward, caught her in his arms.

“About face, you rascals,” he said to the two men, who promptly obeyed his peremptory order by turn-

ing their backs to him. Then he continued, "A kiss for the diamond, beloved."

Von Langfeld, as he drew her to him, found her strangely yielding in his arms. She had surrendered herself to Keene's embrace a few nights before despite herself and because she could not help it, swept away by his passion and her own, but this yielding was different. This was the result of cold-blooded calculation.

"Before Keene, the traitor, I take you," continued von Langfeld, bending to kiss her and thinking how doubly sweet would be that caress with Keene impotently looking on.

But betwixt lip and lip there is many a slip as he was to learn. With incredible quickness and equal courage, Barbara with her free hand whipped out his own pistol from the holster of the utterly unsuspecting German and, pressing the barrel hard into his stomach as she did so, cried out,

"Hands up!"

It would have been better if she had pressed the trigger without a word. For a moment he stood motionless. Keene had cut Dempsey's bonds, the worst lashings at any rate, and the sheriff had seized the knife and done him the same service. As Keene stooped to cut his feet free he heard Barbara's triumphant cry. So did von Langfeld's other men. The two guards turned, the third man left the fire.

But before either could draw a weapon Mr. Stevens' pistol got the last. He stepped out from behind the tree that had concealed him and covered the others. At the same time he threw Barbara's pistol to Dempsey, and the three remaining Germans, being helpless, Barbara stepped back and handed von Langfeld's pistol to Keene.

Before he could take it the big German awoke to action. The game was not lost; there were still two men with him. Two were running back toward him down the path; the man going down to the shore had stopped and turned at the sound of the shot. They were, or soon would be, six men to three men and one woman. Von Langfeld was a two-gun man. He took advantage of the second in which Keene permitted himself to look at Barbara to spring back and sideways.

"For the Fatherland!" he shouted, drawing his second weapon. "I'll get you anyway," he continued, levelling his pistol at Keene and pressing the trigger.

The girl quickest sensed the danger. She threw herself before the man she loved and was shot down. Then Keene went mad. The rage of the old berserker overcame him. He dropped the pistol and sprang at von Langfeld.

The latter, unnerved because to him had come in a flash the awful conviction that he had killed the



As Keene cut his bonds, he heard Barbara's triumphant cry, "Hands up!"

woman he loved as much as it was in him to love anyone, hastily fired at the man leaping upon him like a raging tiger. He had no time to decide whether he had hit him or not before Keene seized him. The American could have torn him limb from limb in his mad fury. In his berserk passion the engineer lifted him up in the air bodily.

Von Langfeld struggled furiously. He saw death at hand. He might as successfully cope with the wild anger of the American as a leaf might withstand the hurricane. For a second or two he struggled, cursed, prayed—and then he fell. Through the air he hurtled, over the cliff he drove to join Wan-Aman and Po-Yan-Pen and all the murderous crew of his own nation that the clean bullets of France, and England, and Italy, and Belgium, and Serbia, and last but not least the United States, had sent to their deserved account.

Keene did not wait to see him fall, he did not hear him crash and break on the rocks below, or roll and plunge, crushed, broken, dying, into the swirling water at the foot of the cliff. He did not take any further part in the fierce battle by which Dempsey and Stevens presently got the better of the remaining spies as they came on. The bullets whistled about him unheeded as he knelt down and lifted up the woman he loved in his arms.

The former situation was reversed. He sought to

do for her what she had done for him. With nervous hands he cut away her jacket and her waist. The wound was in her shoulder. It was not fatal, not dangerous even. She had fainted after that instinctive movement to shield him. His caresses, more potent than the spirit she had used, called her back to life and love in his arms.

“I doubted you,” he whispered. “God forgive me, I doubted you.”

“It was you all the time, didn’t you know, didn’t you feel?” she made answer, her soul in her gaze.

And once again she gave back his kisses, not so hard as those in the garden, as he pressed her to his heart.

EPILOGUE

NOW the story ought to end right there. Yet it does not. There is still a little more to be told. Mr. Stevens, who neglected no point in the game, having been retaught by his one failure with Barbara—which turned out so well after all!—remembered the launch. While Keene and Barbara continued their highly interesting, though strictly personal conversation, Mr. Stevens and Dempsey captured the astonished and unsuspecting crew of the motor boat without difficulty as it came to the shore. They decided to place their prisoners, all disarmed and securely bound, together with the platinum which they easily recovered, aboard the big and entirely seaworthy motor boat, and in her make for Seattle as the easiest way of disposing of men and treasure.

There was abundance of food, water, and gasoline aboard. Indeed the boat had been equipped for a run down the coast toward old Mexico and the waiting schooner. The weather was pleasant. There was nothing to be feared. Yet far out at sea something happened—a break-down of the engine! The united skill of the whole party, from Keene down to the

sullen German engineer of the boat who was pressed into service, was quite unequal to the job of repairing it. Therefore the boat drifted helplessly in the pleasant seas.

Fate had done its worst by them, however, for the next morning at dawn they were observed, overhauled and picked up by the great steel freighter *Cambodia*, bound in for Seattle from the China Seas.

"Aren't you the young chap we took out of a derelict and left at Honolulu some months since?" asked Captain Murray, whose unerring eyes had recognized his former passenger, as they all gathered in his spacious cabin after the prisoners and the platinum had been passed aboard and secured.

"I am," answered Keene.

"You were talking a lot in your delirium about some Malays, I take it, and a woman."

"This is the woman, Captain. She is going to marry me as soon as we can find a parson ashore."

"I see you've come to your senses, young man," answered the old shipmaster, smiling his approval of Barbara Le Moyne, who, save for a slight and unwonted paleness, showed no ill effects from her wound. "The details of your story will keep. You can spin a yarn complete later. Meanwhile, if you are both set on getting married as soon as you find a parson, you won't have too long to wait."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Keene.

“ We happen to be bringing home some American missionaries —— ”

Keene turned to Barbara. The color missing from her cheeks had come back in full flood.

She smiled, she nodded in answer to his obvious if unspoken plea.

“ Why not here and now, if you wish it? ” she said, simply.

She was of that rare variety of woman who made no particular fuss even about getting married.

It was with difficulty that Keene restrained himself from taking her in his arms at her ready acquiescence. Captain Murray looked as if he would have enjoyed seeing that performance, too. Old Dempsey broke into the conversation with a question,

“ You wouldn’t want to git hitched up together nowheres but in the old U. S. A., would you, Miss Babby? ”

Barbara shook her head, but the resourceful old sea dog, who seemed to be running things, promptly bridged that gap without difficulty.

“ This ship is the United States, all right,” he answered. “ And I’m the government thereof. I can issue a marriage license, or any other kind, I guess, and I could even splice you hard and fast myself in case of need,” he continued, with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

There being no further ground for objection, the

missionary was summoned, matters were explained to his satisfaction and in the cabin of the ship, with Mr. Stevens to stand by Keene, the chief stewardess to do a like office for Barbara, while old Dempsey gave away the bride, the two lovers were married.

Mr. Stevens claimed the floor—or the deck, rather—after the benediction for a little speech, the gist of which ended in the presentation to the bride of a wondrous diamond in a curious oriental setting.

“I picked it up from the ground where von Langfeld dropped it when you got the drop on him, Miss Le—Mrs. Keene. Everybody seemed to have forgot it. Possibly the United States might claim it as the property of an alien enemy now—deceased. But I don’t think the question will be raised——”

“Not by me,” interposed Captain Murray, the irrepressible, “and I’m the United States on this ship.”

“Exactly,” continued Mr. Stevens, realizing that it is a perilous thing to contradict the captain of a ship on his own quarter deck, so to speak, “therefore by unanimous consent it is yours as your wedding gift. And, indeed, I think you earned it by your woman’s wit and your man’s courage.”

“Now that is settled, and in so satisfactory a way I bid you all to the best wedding breakfast the old *Cambodia* can put up. At which time I and my officers will hear the yarn and drink the health of the

bride," remarked the shipmaster, who would have the last word.

In the official log book of the *Cambodia* are not all these things soberly and veraciously set down and attested? But no log book could contain or record the happiness that filled the hearts of that gallant and daring pair of lovers who had come, as it were, through difficulties to the stars!—bringing the white treasure with them.



